THE RECONCILEABLENESS OF God's Prescience OF THE SINS of MEN, WITH The *Wisdom* and *Sincerity* of his Counsels, Exhortations, and whatsoever Means He uses to prevent them.

In a Letter to the Honourable *Robert Boyle* Esq;

To which is added a

POST-SCRIPT IN Defence of the said *LETTER*.

By *John Howe*, M. A. sometime Fellow of *Magdalen* Colledge, *Oxon.*

London: Printed for *Brabazon Aylmer*, at the Three Pigeons, over against the *Royal Exchange* in *Cornhil.* 1677.

THE RECONCILEABLENESS OF God's Prescience, &c.

Sir,

THe veneration I have long had for your Name, could not permit me to apprehend less obligation than that of a Law, in your recommendidg to me this subject. For within the whole compass of intellectual employment and affairs, none but who

are ſo unhappy as not at all to know you, would diſpute your right to preſcribe, and give Law.

And taking a nearer view of the Province you have aſſigned me, I muſt eſteem it alike both diſingenuous and undutiful, wholly to have refus'd it. For the leſs you could think it poſſible to me to perform in it, the more I might perceiv of kindneſs allaying the Authority of the impoſition; And have the apprehenſion the more obvious to me that you rather deſign'd in it mine own advantage, than that you reckon'd the cauſe could receiv any, by my undertaking it.

The doubt, I well know, was mention'd by you as other Mens, and not your own; whoſe clear mind, and diligent enqiry leave you little liable to be encumb'red with greater difficulties.

Wherefore that I ſo ſoon divert from you, and no more allow theſe papers to expreſs any regard unto you, till the

ſhutting

ſhutting of the diſcourſe, is only a ſeeming diſreſpect or indecorum, put in the ſtead of a real one. For after you have given them the countenance, as to let it be underſtood, you gave the firſt riſe and occaſion to the buſineſs and deſign of them; I had little reaſon to ſlur that ſtamp put upon them, by adding to their (enough other) faults, that of making them guilty of ſo great a misdemeanour, and impertinency, as to continue a diſcourſe of this length, to one that hath ſo little leaſure or occaſion to attend to any thing can be ſaid by them.

WHat there is of difficulty in this matter I cannot pretend to ſet down in thoſe moſt apt expreſſions wherein it was re- Sect. 1.

preſented to me, and muſt therefore endeavour to ſupply a bad memory out of a worſe invention.

So much appears very obvious, That, aſcribing to the ever bleſſed God, among the other Attributes which we take to belong to an every way Perfect Being, a knowledg ſo perfect as ſhall admit of no poſſible acceſſion or increaſe; and conſeqently the Preſcience of all future events (as whereof we doubt him not to have the diſtinct knowledg when they ſhall have actually come to paſs.) Since many of thoſe events are the ſinful actions or omiſſions of men, which he earneſtly counſels and warns them againſt; This matter of doubt cannot but ariſe hereupon, *viz.*

How it can ſtand with the wiſdom & ſincerity

rity which our own thoughts do by the earlieſt anticipation challenge to that ever happy Being, to uſe theſe (or any other means) with a viſible deſign to prevent that, which, in the mean time appears to that all-ſeeing eye, ſure to come to paſs.

So that, by this repreſentation of the Caſe, there ſeem to be committed together. Either 1ſt. *Gods wiſdom* with this part of his knowledg. For we judg it not to conſiſt with the wiſdom of a man, to deſign and purſue an end, which he foreknows he ſhall never attain: Or 2ly. the ſame foreknowledg with his *ſincerity* and uprightneſs, that he ſeems intent upon an end, which indeed he intends not.

The matter then comes ſhortly to this ſumme. Either the holy God ſeriouſly intends the prevention of ſuch foreſeen ſinful actions and

and omiſſions or he doth not intend it. If he do, His wiſdom ſeems liable to be impleaded, as above. If he do not, his uprightneſs and Truth.

My purpoſe is not, in treating of this affair, to move a diſpute concerning the fitnes of the words [preſcience] or [foreknowledg] Or to trouble this diſcourſe with notions I underſtand not, of the indiviſibility, and unſucceſſivenes of eternal duration, Whence it would be collected there can be no ſuch thing as *firſt* or *ſecond* fore-or after-knowledg in that duration. But be contented to ſpeak as I can underſtand, and be underſtood. That is, to call that foreknowledg which is the knowledg of ſomewhat that as yet is not, but that ſhall ſometime come to paſs. For

it were a meer piece of legerdemeſn only to amuſe enqirers whom one would pretend to ſatisfie. Or to fly to a cloud for refnge from the force of an argument, and avoid an occurring difficulty by the preſent reliefleſs ſhift of involving one-ſelf in greater.

Nor ſhall I deſign to my ſelf ſo large a field as a *Tractate* concerning the *divine Preſcience*. So as to be obliged to diſcourſe particularly whatſoever may be thought to belong to that Theological Topick. But confine the diſcourſe to my enjoyned ſubject. And offer only ſuch conſiderations as may ſome way tend to expedite or alleviate the preſent difficulty.

II. It were one of the greateſt injuries to Religion, a ſubverſion indeed of its very foundations. And §. II.

And then by doing which, we could not more highly gratifie atheiſtical minds, inſtead, and under pretence of aſcribing perfections to the nature of God, to aſcribe to it inconſiſtencies, or to give a ſelf-repugnant notion of that adorable Being, The parts whereof ſhould juſtle and not accord with one another. And yet eqal care is to be taken, leſt while we endeavour to frame a conſiſtent notion of God, we reject ſtom it any thing that is truly a perfection, and ſo give a maimed one. Whereby we ſhould undo our own deſign, and by our over much caution to make our conception of him agree with it ſelf, make it diſagree to him. For to *an abſolute perfect Being*, no other can agree than that, which not only is not made up of contradictions, but which alſo comprehends

prehends in it all real perfections either explicitely, or which leaves room for all, by not positively excluding any of them. Which to do, and afterward, to assign that as the proper notion of God, were, it self, the greatest contradiction. We need therefore to be very warie, lest we pronounce too hastily concerning any thing, which to our most sedate thoughts, appeares simply a perfection in it self, that it carries with it a repugnancie to somewhat else, necessary to be ascribed to him.

We are first to suspect (as there is greatest cause) and enqire whether the aile be not wholly in our own minds. Which in this and such like cases, we certainly shall upon due reflection, find labouring under the natural defect of that incomprehensive narrownes,

that

that is, in ſome degree, unavoidably followed with confuſion and indiſtinctnes of thoughts. And may perhaps find cauſe to accuſe them of the more culpable evils, both of ſlothfulnes, that withholds them from doing what they can, and ſelf-conceit by which they imagine to themſelves an ability of doing what they cannot.

It cannot be unobſerved by them that have made themſelves any part of their own ſtudy, that it is very incident to our minds, to graſp at more than they can compaſs; and then, thorough their own ſcantines (like the little hand of a child) to throw away one thing that hath pleaſed us, to make room for another, becauſe we cannot comprehend both together.

It is not ſtrange, that our ſo ſtraitly limited underſtandings, ſhould

ſhould not be able to lodg commodiouſly the immenſe perfections of a Deity. So as to allow them liberty to ſpread themſelves in our thoughts in their entire proportions. And becauſe we cannoot, we complain, when we feel our ſelves a little pincht, that the things will not conſiſt ; when the matter is , that we have unduly crouded and huddled them up together , in our incomprehenſive minds, that have not diſtinctly conceived them.

And tho this conſideration ſhould not be uſed for the protection of an uſurped liberty of faſtening upon God, arbitrarily and at random, what we pleaſe (As indeed what ſo groſs abſurdity might not any one give ſhelter to by ſuch a miſapplication of it ?) We ought yet to think it ſeaſonably apply'd,

apply'd, when we find our ſelves urged with difficulties on one hand and the other ; and apprehend it hard, with clearnes and ſatisfaction, to aſcribe to God, what we alſo find it not eaſie not to aſcribe.

Nor would it be leſs unfit to apply it for the patronage of that ſlothfulnes wherein our diſcouraged minds are ſometimes too prone to indulge themſelves.

To which purpoſe I remember ſomewhat very appoſitely in *Minucius Felix*, That many thorough the meer tediouſneſs of finding out the truth, do rather, by a mean ſuccumbency, yeild to the firſt ſpecious ſhew of any opinion whatſoever than be at the trouble, by a pertinacious diligence, of applying, themſelves to a thorough ſearch.

Tho

Tho the comprehenſion of our Minds be not infinite, it might be extended much further than uſually it is, if we would allow our ſelves with patient diligence to conſider things at leaſure, and ſo as *gradually* to ſtretch and enlarge our own underſtandings. Many things have carried the appearance of contradiction and inconſiſtencie, to the firſt view of our ſtraitened minds, which afterwards, we have, upon repeated conſideration and endeavour, found room for, and been able to make fairly accord, and lodg together.

Eſpecially we ſhould take heed leſt it be *excluded* by over-much conceitednes, and a ſelf-arrogating pride, that diſdains to be thought not able to ſee thorough every thing, by the firſt and

ſlighteſt glance of an haughty eye; and peremptorily determines that to be unintelligible, that an arrogant uninſtructed mind hath only not humility enough to acknowledg difficult to be underſtood. Whence it is too poſsible ſome may be overprone to detract from God what really belongs to him, leſt any thing ſhould ſeem detracted from themſelves, and impute imperfection to him rather than confeſs their own. And may be ſo overaſcribing to themſelves, as to reckon it a diſparagement not to be endured, to ſeem a little puzzled for the preſent; to be put to pauſe, and draw breath a while, and look into the matter again and again; which if their humility and patience would enable them to do; It is not likely that the

the Author of our faculties would be unaſsiſting to them, in thoſe our enqiries which concern our duty towards himſelf.

For tho in mattes of meer ſpeculation, we may be encountred with difficulties, whereof perhaps no mortal can ever be able to find out the ſolution (which is no great prejudice, and may be gainful and inſtructive to us) Yet as to what concerns the object of our Religion, it is to be hoped we are not left in unextricable entanglements; Nor ſhould think we are till we have made utmoſt trial. The deſign being not to gratifie our curioſity, but to relieve our ſelves of uncomfortable doubtfulnes in the matter of our worſhip, and (in a dutiful zeal towards the bleſſed object thereof) to vindicate it againſt the cavils of ill-minded men.

§. III. But if the unſucceſsfulnes of often repeated endeavours make us deſpair of being able, with ſo full ſatisfaction, to reconcile ſome things which we have thought were to be attributed to God; It will be ſome relief to us, if we find the things about which the doubt lies, are not of the ſame order, nor ſuch as with eqal evidence and neceſſity are to be affirmed of him.

And when we make a compariſon, we may find our ſelves at a certainty concerning thoſe his Attributes which moſt commonly, and at the firſt view, approve themſelves to every man's underſtanding.

Among which we little heſitate, (as we are moſt concern'd not to do,) about thoſe which carry with them the import of *moral goodneſs*; and which render the object of our

our Religion, at once, both moſt venerable and lovely. For none do more naturally obtain for common notions concerning him; ſo as even to prevent ratiocination or argument, with whomſoever the apprehenſion of his exiſtence hath place.

Every man's mind, it being once acknowledg'd that there is a God, refuſes to conceive otherwiſe of him, than that he is holy, juſt, merciful, true, &c. And rejects with abhorrency the notion of an impure, unrighteous, cruel, deceitful Deity.

As for thoſe that, by a long train of our own more uncertain and lubricous reaſonings, we endeavour to deduce; If we find our ſelves conſtrain'd any where to admit a diffidence, It were rather to be plac't here. For it is at

firſt ſight evident, ſince God is moſt certainly willing to be known of them that are ſincerely willing to know him; that what is a natural impreſsion, ſtamped by his own hand on every man's mind, hath more of abſolute certainty, than what depends on metaphyſical ſubtlety; whereof ſo very few are capable, and whereby divers pretenders thereto, do ſo freqently, (and perhaps very dangerouſly) enſnare themſelves. And it is of far greater importance, ſuch a notion of God be entertained, as whereby he may be rendered amiable, and an inviting object of love (the very life and ſoul of all Religion) than ſuch as ſhall be the reſult, and entertainment, only of Scholaſtic wit.

Yet alſo ſince it is very manifeſt

feſt that Man is now become a degenerate Creature, and in an Apoſtacy from God: He is very little to be truſted with the framing his own *Idæa* of him; being certainly moſt unapt to allow any thing a place in it, that would have an unfavourable aſpect upon his vicious inclinations and his guilty ſtate. And the contagion of man's ſinfulnes having ſpread it ſelf as far as he hath propagated his own Nature; ſo as no notion in his Mind can be more common than the perverſion and diſtemper of his mind it ſelf; The poſſibility and danger is very obvious, of miſtaking a dictate of depraved nature for an authentic *common notion.* And tho theſe are not impoſſible to be diſtinguiſhed, and in ſome caſes very eaſie, as when men find it impo-

ſed unavoidably upon them, to apprehend and acknowledg ſome things which they are very unwilling ſhould be true (In which caſe their ſentiments have the ſame right to be believed as the teſtimony of an enemy on the oppoſite partie's behalf.) We have yet no reaſon to neglect any other means, whereby we may be more certainly directed how to conceive of God, or what we are to attribute to him, and what not.

§. IV. Nor can we be at a greater certainty, than in admitting ſuch things to belong to the Bleſſed God as he plainly affirms of himſelf; or any way, by his Word, evidently diſcovers to belong to him. *For as none knowes the things of a man, but the ſpirit of a man that is in him, ſo the things of God are known to none but the Spirit of God.* 1 Cor. 2.

Taking

Taking therefore his own Word for our meaſure in the preſent caſe (which I will ſuppoſe the Reader not to think it unreaſonable to appeal to; And what is here ſaid, is intended only for thoſe that have *that* eſtimate of the Writings wont to go under that name) what it ſaies of him (much more what it proves) will no doubt be admitted for certain truth. Though, if it ſay ſuch things, as, to us, ſeem not ſo manifeſtly to agree with one another, Our endeavour muſt be the more earneſt and ſolicitous (as alſo it ought to be the more modeſt) to diſcuſs, and remove the ἐναντιοφανὲς, or whatſoever ſemblance of diſagreement.

And whoſoever concern themſelves to peruſe that venerable Book, will find every where, on the

the one hand, proclaimed and magnify'd in it (what our own minds cannot but have been prepoſſeſſed of) *the moſt exqiſite Wiſdom of God*, whereby he forms and contrives the methods of all his diſpenſations, and diſpoſes them in the apteſt ſubſerviency to his own great and moſt important
Deut. 32. ends. That *all his waies are judgment*; and that he worketh all
Eph. 1. things according to the *counſel* of his Will. In ſumme, that all wiſdom is appropriated to him, that he is celebrated in the ſtyle
Rom. 16. *ult.* of *God, only Wiſe*. Nor are we therefore to think it ſtrange, if, many times, we are not able to trace him out, or underſtand the reaſon of every thing he thinks fit to do. For the paths of the more perfect wiſdom, muſt therefore be expected to be the more abſtruſe,

and

and remoter from common apprehenſion.

How often do we find our ſelves ſo far outgone by wiſe and deſigning men, as that we are ſometimes conſtrain'd to confeſs and admire their great prudence and conduct (when they have effected their purpoſes) in thoſe managements, which we have before beheld, either with ſilent ignorance, or perhaps, not without cenſure. How much leſs ſhould the wiſeſt of men regret it, to find all their conjectures exceeded by the infinite Wiſdom. In the contemplation whereof, we find the great Apoſtle (notwithſtanding the vaſt capacity of his divinely enlightned underſtanding) exclaiming in a tranſport. *O the depths!* Rom. 11. 33.

And when our eyes tell us, from

ſo

ſo manifeſt ſtupendous effects, how far we are exceeded by him in power, it were reaſonable to expect he ſhould ſurpaſs us proportionably in the contrivances of his Wiſdom alſo.

And whereas the conjunction is rare, among men, of deep political wiſdom, with integrity and ſtrict righteouſneſs; This proceeds from the imperfection and inſufficiency of the former in great part, that they know not how to compaſs their deſigns, unleſs often, by ſupplying their want of wiſdom, out of the ſpoil and violation of their juſtice and honeſty. Otherwiſe, theſe are things not ſo altogether out of credit in the world, but that men would rather accompliſh their purpoſes by fair and unexceptionable means, if they could tell how. Only the

reſpect

reſpect and deference they have for them is leſs, than what they bear to their own intereſts and ends.

But beſides the natural inflexible rectitude of the divine Will, we are ſecured, from his *all-ſufficiencie*, that we ſhall never be fraudulently impoſed upon by any of his declarations unto the children of men. For there is nothing to be gained by it: And we cannot conceive what inducement he ſhould have, to make uſe of any ſo mean and pitiful ſhifts for the governing of his Creatures, whom he ſpontaneouſly raiſed out of nothing, and hath ſo perfectly within his power.

Unleſs we ſhould be ſo moſt intolerably injurious to him, as to imagine a worſe thing of him than we would of the worſt of men,

men, that he loved falſhood *for its own ſake.* And *that*, aginſt his ſo conſtantly profeſſed deteſtation of it, the declared repugnancie of it to his Nature, and the even tenour of his Word (every where agreeing with it ſelf herein) ſo often deſcribing him by that property, *God that cannot lye.* And, with the ſame poſitivenes, avowing his own uprightnes, and reqiring it, expreſsing his great love to it, and the high delight he takes to find it in his (intelligent)
Pſ.11.7. creatures. *The righteous God loveth righteouſnes, and with his countenance doth he behold the upright.*

Nor is his teſtimony the leſs to be regarded for that it is laudatory, and of himſelf. For we are to conſider the Prerogative of him that teſtifies, and that if he were not ἀυτόπιστος he were not God. Beſides

ſides that his giving us this, or any, repreſentation of himſelf (to whom it were enough to enjoy his own Perfections) is a *vouchſafement*, and done of meer grace and favour to us, that we may by it be induced to place with ſatisfaction, our unſuſpicious truſt and confidence in him. As alſo, that he ſaies, in all this, no other thing of himſelf, than what our own minds, conſidering him as God, muſt acknowledg moſt worthy of him, and agreeing to him with the moſt apparent neceſſity.

This part, therefore, of the *Idæa* of God hath ſo firm a foundation, both in the natural complexion of our own minds, and the report which his Word makes of him, that on this hand we are hemm'd in as by a wall of Adamant: And cannot have the thought of defending

fending his *Preſcience*, by intrenching upon his Wiſdom and Truth, without offering the higheſt violence both to him and our ſelves.

§. V. On the other hand alſo, as it cannot but ſeem to us an higher perfection to know all things at once, than gradually to arrive to the knowledg of one thing after another; and ſo proceed from the ignorance of ſome things to the knowledg of them; and that nothing is more certain, than that all poſsible perfection muſt agree to God; So we find his own Word aſſerting to him that moſt perfect knowledg which ſeems to exclude the poſsibility of increaſe; or that any thing ſhould *ſucceed* into his knowledg. For how plainly is it affirmed of him that he *knows all things*. And even concerning

cerning ſuch future things as about which our preſent enqirie is converſant, The affirmation is expreſs and poſitive. *I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from antient times the things that are not yet done.* Iſai. 46. 9, 10. with Ch. 41. 22, 23.

Nor is the affirmation naked, and unfortify'd. For, in the ſame ſacred records, we have the ſame thing both affirmed and proved: Inasmuch as we find, in a great part thereof, are contained things foretold by moſt expreſs Prophecy, unto which the Events recorded in other parts (and many of them in other unqeſtioned Writings beſides) have ſo punctually correſponded, as to leave no place for doubt or cavil. Inſtances are ſo plain and well known that they need not be mentioned. And

ſurely what was ſo expreſsly fore-told could not but have been fore-known.

It ſeems then an attempt alſo eqally hopeles and unrelieving, as it were adventurous and bold, to offer at the protection of his *Wiſdom* and *Sinceritie*, by aſſaulting his *Preſcience* or certain fore-knowledg of whatſoever ſhall come to paſs.

And that their defence is not to be attempted this way, will further moſt evidently appear from hence, That it is not impoſſible to aſsign particular inſtances of ſome or other moſt confeſſedly wicked actions; againſt which God had directed thoſe ordinary means of counſelling and dehorting men, and which yet it is moſt certain he did foreknow they would do. As, tho it was

ſo

ſo punctually determined even * to a day, and was (tho not ſo punctually) † foretold unto *Abraham*, how long, from that time, * his ſeed ſhould be ſtrangers in a Land that was not theirs; Yet how freqent are the counſels and warnings ſent to *Pharaoh* to diſmiſs them ſooner; Yea how often are *Moſes* and *Aaron* directed to claim their liberty, and exhort *Pharaoh* to let them go, and at the ſame time told, he ſhould not hearken to them. Nor indeed is it more ſeldome ſaid that the Lord hardened *Pharaoh*'s heart, leſt he ſhould. Tho it may be a doubt whether thoſe paſſages be truly tranſlated. For the gentler meaning of the Hebrew idiom being well known, it would ſeem more agreeable to the Text, to have expreſſed only the intended ſenſe,

* Exod. 12. 41.

† Gen. 15. 3.

* What there is of difficulty or doubt about this Prophecy, ſee fully cleared in the late Letter to the Deiſt.

Exod. 4. &c.

than to have ſtrained a word to the very utmoſt of its literal import, and manifeſtly beyond what was intended.

After the like manner is the Prophet *Ezekiel* ſent to the revolted *Iſraelites*. And directed to ſpeak to them *with Gods own words*, The ſumme and purport whereof was to warn and dehort them from their wicked waies *leſt they ſhould die*; when as yet it is plainly told him, *But the houſe of Iſrael will not hearken to thee, for they will not hearken to me.*

Ch. 3. v. 4.

Unto which ſame purpoſe it is more pertinent, than neceſſary to be added, That our Saviours own plain aſſertions that he was the Son of God, the many Miracles by which he confirmed it, and his freqent exhortations to the *Jews* to believe in him thereupon, had a ma-

a manifeſt tendency to make him be known and believed to be ſo, and conſeqently to prevent that moſt horrid act of his crucifixion (for it is ſaid, and the matter ſpeaks it ſelf, that, *if they had known they would not have crucify'd the Lord of Glory.*) Notwithſtanding that it was a thing which Gods hand and counſel had determined before to be done. That is, foreſeeing wicked hands would be prompt and ready for this tragic enterpriſe, his Sovereign Power and Wiſe Counſel concurred with his foreknowledg, ſo only, and not with leſs latitude, to define or determine the bounds and limits of that malignity, than to let it proceed unto this Execution. And to deliver him up (not by any formal reſignation, or ſurrender, as we well know, but

1 Cor. 2.

Act. 4. 28.

permitting him) thereunto. Tho the ſame phraſe of *delivering him*, hath elſewhere, another notion of *aſſigning* or *appointing him* to be a propitiation for the ſins of men, by dying; which was done by mutual agreement between both the parties, him that was to propitiate, and him who was to be propitiated. In which reſpect our Saviour is alſo ſaid to have given himſelf for the ſame purpoſe; Which purpoſe it was determined not to hinder prepared hands to execute in this way.

Tit. 2. 14.

Now if it did appear but in one ſingle inſtance only, that the Bleſſed God did foreknow, and dehort from the ſame act, It will be plainly conſeqent, that his warnings and dehortations from wicked actions in the general, can with no pretence be alledged as a proof

a proof againſt his univerſal Preſcience. For if the argument [he dehorted from the doing ſuch an action, therefore he did not foreknow it] would be able to conclude any thing, it muſt be of ſufficient force to conclude univerſally; which it cannot do, if but a ſingle inſtance can be given, wherein it is apparent, he did both dehort and foreknow. It can only pretend to raiſe the doubt which we have in hand to diſcuſs, *how fitly*, and with what wiſdom and ſinceritie, he can be underſtood to interpoſe his counſels and monitions in ſuch a caſe.

Wherefore nothing remains but to conſider how theſe may be reconciled, and made appear to be no way inconſiſtent with one another. §. VI.

Nor are we to apprehend herein ſo great a difficulty, as it were to reconcile his irreſiſtible predeterminative concurrence to all actions of the creature, *even thoſe that are in themſelves moſt malignantly wicked*, with the wiſdom and righteouſneſs of his Laws againſt them, and ſevereſt Puniſhments of them according to thoſe Laws.

Which ſentiments muſt, I conceive, to any impartial underſtanding, leave it no way ſufficiently explicable, how the influence and concurrence, the holy God hath to the worſt of actions, is to be diſtinguiſht from that which he affords to the beſt; Wherein ſuch inherently evil actions are leſs to be imputed to him who forbids them, than to the malicious tempter who prompts to them, or the actor that does them,

them, or wherein not a great deal more. And leave it undeniable, that the matter of all his Lawes, in reference *to all ſuch actions* that ever have been done in the world, was a *ſimple and moſt ſtrictly natural impoſſibilitie*. Nothing being more apparently ſo, than either not to do an action whereto the agent is determined by an infinite Power; or to ſeparate the malignity thereof, from an intrinſecally evil action; And that this *natural impoſſibility of not ſinning* was the ineluctable fate of his (at firſt) *innocent Creatures*. Who alſo (as the caſe is to be conceived of with the Angels that kept not their firſt ſtation) muſt be underſtood *irreverſibly* condemned to the ſuffering of eternal puniſhment, for the not doing of what it was (upon theſe terms) ſo abſolutely

ſolutely impoſſible to them to avoid.

§. VII. This too hard Province the preſent deſign pretends not to intermeddle in, As being neither apprehended manageable, for thoſe briefly mentioned conſiderations, and many more that are wont to be inſiſted on in this argument.

Nor indeed at all neceſſary; For tho many conſiderations have been with great ſubtilty, alledg'd and urged to this purpoſe, by former and ſome Modern Writers, (Which it is beſides the deſign of theſe Papers ſeverally to diſcuſs) Theſe two, which ſeem the moſt importunate and enforcing, will, I conceive, be found of little force; and then, the leſs ſtrength which is in others, will be

be nothing formidable; *viz*:

That it neceſſarily belongs to the Original and Fountain-Being, to be the firſt Cauſe of whatſoever Being; And conſeqently, that what there is of poſitive Being in any the moſt wicked action, muſt principally owe it ſelf to the determinative productive influence of this firſt and ſovereign Cauſe. Otherwiſe it would ſeem there were ſome Being that were neither *Primum*, nor *a primo*.

And again(which we are more concerned to conſider, becauſe it more concerns our preſent ſubject) that it were otherwiſe impoſsible God ſhould foreknow the ſinful actions of men (many whereof, as hath been obſerved, he hath foretold) if their futurition were a meer contingency,

and

and depended on the uncertain will of the ſubordinate agent, not determined by the Supream.

But neither of theſe ſeem able to infer the diſmal concluſion of God's concurring *by a determinative influence* unto wicked actions.

Not the former; For it may well be thought ſufficiently to ſalve the rights and priviledg of the firſt Cauſe, to aſſert that no action can be done but *by a power derived from it*; which, in reference to forbidden actions, intelligent Creatures may uſe or not uſe as they pleaſe, without over-aſſerting, that they muſt be irreſiſtibly determined alſo, even to the worſt of actions done by them. Beſides, that it ſeems infinitely to detract from the Perfection of the ever Bleſſed God, to affirm he was not able to make a Crea-

a Creature, of ſuch a nature, as, being continually ſuſtained by him, and ſupplyed with power every moment ſutable to its nature, ſhould be capable of acting; unleſs whatſoever he thus *enables*, he *determine* (that is, for it can mean no leſs thing, *impel*) it to do alſo.

And except it were affirmed *impoſſible* to God to have made ſuch a Creature, (that is, that it imply'd a contradiction, which certainly can never be proved) there is no imaginable pretence why it ſhould not be admitted he hath done it: Rather than ſo fatally expoſe the Wiſdom, Goodnes, and Righteouſnes of God, by ſuppoſing him to have made Lawes for his reaſonable Creatures, impoſſible, thorough his own irreſiſtible counter-action, to

be obſerved: and afterwards to expreſs himſelf diſpleaſed, and adjudg his Creatures to eternal puniſhments, for not obſerving them.

I am not altogether ignorant what attempts have been made to prove it impoſsible, Nor again, what hath been done to manifeſt the vanity of thoſe attempts. But I muſt confeſs a greater diſpoſition to wonder, that ever ſuch a thing ſhould be diſputed, than diſpute ſo plain a caſe. And that a matter whereupon all moral Government depends, both humane and divine, ſhould not have been determined at the firſt ſight.

'Tis not hard for a good Wit to have ſomewhat to ſay for any thing. But to diſpute againſt the common ſenſe of Mankind, we know before hand, is but to trifle;

trifle; as the eſſay to prove the impoſsibility of local motion.

The *notion* of the goodnes and righteouſnes of God, methinks, ſhould ſtick ſo cloſe to our minds, and create ſuch a ſenſe in our Souls, as ſhould be infinitely dearer to us than all our ſenſes and powers. And that we ſhould rather chooſe to have our ſight, hearing, and motive power, or what not beſides, diſputed, or even torn away from us, than ever ſuffer our ſelves to be diſputed into a belief, that the holy and good God ſhould irreſiſtibly determine the wills of men to, and puniſh, the ſame thing. Nor is it difficult to urge more puzzling ſophiſms againſt the former, than for this latter.

But the efforts of a ſophiſtical Wit againſt ſenſe, and more againſt

againſt the ſenſe of our Souls, and moſt of all againſt the entire ſumme and ſubſtance of all Morality, and Religion, at once, are but like the attempt to batter a Wall of Braſs with ſtraws and feathers.

Nor is the aſſault, on this part, more feeble and impotent, than the defence is wont to be of the other. For I would appeal to the qick refined ſenſe of any ſober and pious mind, after ſerious, inward conſultation with it ſelf; being cloſely urged, with the horrour of ſo black a conception of God [that he ſhould be ſuppoſed irreſiſtibly to determine the will of a man to the hatred of his own moſt Bleſſed Self, and then to exact ſevereſt Puniſhments for the offence done] what relief it would now be to it, to be only taught

taught to reply, [*That Man is under the Law, and God above it.*]

A defence that doubles the force of the aſſault. What! that God ſhould make a Law, and neceſſitate the violation of it! and yet alſo puniſh that violation! And this be thought a ſufficient *Salvo*, that himſelf is not ſubject to any Law! Will a qick-ſented, tender ſpirit, wounded by ſo unſufferable indignity, offered to the holy God, be any whit eaſed or relieved, by the thin ſophiſtry of only a colluſive ambiguity in the word [*Law?*] Which ſometimes ſignifies *the declared pleaſure of a Ruler to a Subject*, in which ſenſe any eye can ſee God can be under no law, having no ſuperiour. But not-ſeldome alſo, *an habitual fixed principle and rule of acting after one ſteady tenour.* In

which ſenſe how manifeſt is it, that the perfect rectitude of God's own holy gracious Nature is an eternal Law to him, infinitely more ſtable, and immutable, than the Ordinances of day and night!

Or what relief is there in that dream [*of the ſuppoſed poſſibility of God's making a reaſonable Creature with an innocent averſion to himſelf?*] For what can be ſuppoſed more repugnant? Or what more impertinent? If innocent, how were it puniſhable? A Law already made in the caſe, how can it be innocent?

But whatſoever ſtrength there may be in arguments, and replies, to and fro, in this matter. That which hath too apparently had greateſt actual efficacy, with many, hath been the authority and name

name of this or that man of reputation; and the force of that art of imputing a doctrine, already under a prejudicial doom, to ſome or other ill-reputed former Writer.

I profes not to be skill'd in the uſe of that ſort of weapons. And what reputation ought to be of ſo great value with us, as that of God and Religion!

Tho if one would take that invidious courſe, it were eaſie to evince, that ſuch a predeterminative influx to the production of all whatſoever actions, is the dearly eſpouſed notion of one, of as deſervedly an ill character, as ever had the name of a Chriſtian Writer. And whether he would not take that name for a diſhonour to him, I pretend not to know.

But let us take this ſober account of the preſent caſe, [*That in this temporary ſtate of trial, the efficacious grace of God is neceſſary to actions ſincerely good and holy; which therefore all ought undeſpairingly to ſeek and pray for. But that in reference to other actions, he doth only ſupply men with ſuch a power, as whereby, they are enabled, either to act, or, in many inſtances (and eſpecially when they attempt any thing that is evil) to ſuſpend their own action.*

And ſurely it carries ſo unexceptionable a face and aſpect with it, that no man, that is himſelf ſober, will think the worſt name, of whoſoever ſhall have ſaid the ſame thing, were a prejudice to it; Or ſhould more oblige him to reject it, then we would think our ſelves obliged to throw away Gold, or Diamonds, becauſe an impure

impure hand hath toucht them; Or to deny Chriſt, becauſe the Devils confeſt him.

Tho alſo, if any ſhould impute the ſo ſtating of this matter, to any Authour, that hath been wont to go under an ill name and character, in the Chriſtian Church; There were a great overſight committed (to ſay no harder thing of it.)

For the Writers whoſe names would be ſuppoſed a prejudice, have neither ſaid the ſame thing, nor with the ſame deſign.

They would have this *indetermination* of the power afforded to the creature, to be ſo univerſal, as to extend eqally to evil actions and to good. And have aſſerted it with a manifeſt deſign to exclude efficacious grace, in reference to the beſt actions.

Whereas this account would make it not of ſo large extent. (As it were very unreaſonable any ſhould) For tho it may well be ſuppoſed *extendible* to many actions, beſides thoſe that are intrinſecally evil, or to any that are not ſpiritually good, yet nothing enforces (nor can it be admitted) that it ſhould *actually, and alwaies extend* ſo far. For who can doubt but God can over-rule the inclinations and actions of his creature, when he pleaſes; and, as ſhall beſt conſiſt with his Wiſdom, and the Purity of his Nature, either lay on, or take off his determining hand.

Nor is it here aſſerted with any other deſign, than to exempt the Bleſſed God, as far as is poſſible; from a participation in the evil actions of his Creatures: In the mean

mean time entitling him, moſt entirely, to thoſe that are ſincerely good. Tho it muſt be left imputable to men themſelves (it being thorough their own great default) if they have not the grace, which might effectually enable them, to do ſuch alſo.

And as for the latter. This ſuppoſed indetermination of the human will, in reference, eſpecially; to wicked actions, is far from being capable of inferring, that God cannot therefore foreknow them; Or any thing more, than that we are left ignorant of the way, how he foreknowes them. And how ſmall is the inconvenience of acknowledging that? Yea and how manifeſt the abſurdity of not acknowledging the like, in many caſes? Since nothing is more certain, than that God doth many

things beſides, whereof the manner, how he does them, we can neither explicate nor underſtand! For neither is it difficult to aſsign inſtances, more than enough, of actions done by our ſelves, of the manner whereof, we can give no diſtinct account, as thoſe of viſion, intellection, with ſundry other.

Some have been at great pains we well know to explain the manner of God's foreknowledg of theſe futurities, otherwiſe than by laying the foundation thereof in his (ſuppoſed) efficacious will or decree of them. They that can ſatisfie themſelves with what *Thomas* and *Scotus* have attempted, and the followers of them both; That can underſtand what it is, *with the one*, for all things to be eternally preſent to the Divine intellect

intellect *in eſse reali*, and not underſtand by it, the World to have been eternal. Or what, *with the other*, that they be all preſent only *in eſse repreſentativo*, and not underſtand by it barely *that they are all known*, and no more, (which ſeems like the explication of the word invaſion, by invaſion) let them enjoy their own ſatisfaction.

For my own part I can more eaſily be ſatisfied to be ignorant of the *modus* or *medium* of his knowledg, while I am ſure of the thing; And I know not why any ſober-minded man might not be ſo too. While we muſt all be content to be ignorant of the manner, yea and nature too, of a thouſand things beſides, when that ſuch things there are, we have no doubt. And when there are

few

few things, about which we can, with leſs diſadvantage, ſuffer our being ignorant; or, with leſs diſreputation, profeſs to be ſo.

It cannot therefore be ſo affrightful a thing, to ſuppoſe God's foreknowledg of the moſt contingent future actions, well to conſiſt with our ignorance, how he foreknows them, as that we ſhould think it neceſſary, to overturn and mingle Heaven and Earth, rather than admit it.

§. VIII. Wherefore waving that unfeaſible, unneceſſary, and unenjoyned task, of defending God's *predeterminative* concourſe unto ſinful actions; Our encounter muſt only be of the more ſuperable difficulty, to reconcile his *Preſcience* of them, with his proviſions againſt them, *i. e.* how fitly

fitly the Wiſe and Holy God can have interpoſed his precautions and diſſuaſions, in their own nature, aptly tending to withhold and divert men, from thoſe evil actions, which he yet foreſees they will do.

And it is, in the firſt place, evident, there can be no pretence to alledg, that there is any ſuch repugnancy in the matter, as ſhall amount to a contradiction, ſo much as vertual, or which the things ſignify'd, on the one part and the other, can be underſtood any way to import, That indeed there ſhould be a direct and explicite contradiction between *foreknowing* and *dehorting*, we may, at firſt ſight, perceive the terms cannot admit; For there is nothing enuntiated (affirmed or denied) in either. But let the ſenſe of

of both be reſolved into Propoſitions, capable of being confronted to one another, And all that can be made of the former, will only come to this]you will do ſuch a thing] and of the latter, no more but this [you ought not to do it] Theſe are at as great diſtance, as can be imagined, from grating upon, or jarring with one another.

And wherein is the *indecorum* of it, that both theſe *effata* ſhould proceed from the ſame mouth, *viz.* of a Governour, or one that hath authority over others.

We will, for diſcourſe ſake, ſuppoſe a Prince, endowed with the Gift or Spirit of Prophecy. This, moſt will acknowledg a great perfection, added to whatſoever other his accompliſhments. And ſuppoſe we this his Prophetic abi-

lity

lity ſo large, as to extend to moſt events that ſhall fall out within his dominions. Is it hereby become unfit for him to govern his Subjects by Lawes? or any way admoniſh them of their duty? Hath this Perfection ſo much diminiſht him as to depoſe him from his Government?

It is not indeed to be diſſembled, that it were a difficulty to determine, whether ſuch foreſight were, *for himſelf*, better or worſe. Boundleſs knowledge ſeems only in a fit conjunction with as unbounded power. But it is altogether unimaginable that it ſhould deſtroy his relation to his Subjects. As what of it were left, if it ſhould deſpoil him of his Legiſlative Power, and capacity of governing according to Lawes made by it?

And to bring back the matter to the Supream Ruler. Let it for the preſent be ſuppoſed only, that the Bleſſed God hath, belonging to his Nature, the univerſal Preſcience whereof we are diſcourſing; We will, ſurely, upon that ſuppoſition, acknowledg it to belong to him as a Perfection.

And were it reaſonable to affirm that by a perfection he is diſabled for Government? Or were it a good conſeqence [He foreknowes all things, he is therefore unfit to govern the World!]

§. IX. And, that we may conſider the matter more narrowly; Would the ſuppoſition of ſuch foreknowledg, in God, make that ceaſe to be Man's duty, which had otherwiſe been ſo? and take away the differences of good and evil? Would

Would it nullifie the obligation of God's Law, and make Man's own inclination his only rule? Or, if it be ſaid, becauſe it is foreknown, *Man will* do ſuch a thing, therefore *he may*, where is the connection? For what influence can foreknowledg have, to alter, or affect, any way, either the nature of the thing foreknown, or the temper of the perſon that ſhall do it; any more than the preſent knowledg of the ſame thing, now in doing? Which knowledg none would deny to God: And which, when it occurs to a man, is no more underſtood to make an evil action innocent, than the action makes the eye guilty, of him that beholds it only, and deteſts it at once. Surely what is, in its own nature, whether, good, or evil, can never not be ſo, be it fore-

foreknown or not foreknown.

But if what was otherwiſe man's duty, be ſtill his duty, what can make it unfit that it be declared, and made known to him to be ſo? And how is that otherwiſe to be done, than by theſe diſputed means? Yea (for this is the caſe) what can make it leſs fit, than it would be that God ſhould ceaſe to rule over the World? and qit the right of his Government to his revolted creatures, upon no other reaſon, than only that he foreſees they have a mind to invade it?

It may now, perhaps, be ſaid, All this reaſoning tends indeed to eſtabliſh the contrary aſſertion, [that notwithſtanding God do foreknow man's ſin, it is however neceſſary he forewarn him of it] but it anſwers not the objected

jected difficulty. *viz.* How reasonably any such means are used for an unattainable end. As it is manifest, the end, *Man's Obedience*, cannot be attained when it is foreknown *he will not obey.*

It may here, before we proceed further, not be unseasonable to consider (A matter, as is known, wont to be much vexed in the Schools) *how God may be said to act for any end at all.* And it appears very certain, that he, who is so every way absolutely perfect, and happy, cannot be thought to intend, and pursue an end, after the same manner as we are wont to do. §. X.

We being conscious to our selves of indigency, or, at the best, of obligation to the Authour of our Beings, are wont to design

this or that end for the relieving of our ſelves, or the approving our ſelves to him. And, our ſatisfaction depending upon the attainment of it, we ſolicitouſly deliberate about the fitteſt means to attain it; and are tos't with various Paſſions, of deſire, and hope, and fear, and joy, and grief, according as the end is apprehended more or leſs excellent, or likely to be attained; varying often our courſe upon new emergencies, as this or that may probably promote, or hinder the ſucceſs of our purſuit. In ſhort, we purſue ends, as being both impatient of diſappointment, and uncertain of their attainment.

The Bleſſed God, being indigent of nothing, nor under obligation to any one, cannot be ſuppoſed to propound an end to himſelf

himſelf as that whereupon his ſatisfaction depends, which were inconſiſtent with his already-compleat felicity, and would argue him but potentially happy. But acting alwaies from an immenſe Self-ſufficient fulnes of life, and of all perfections, doth ever ſatisfie himſelf in himſelf, and take higheſt complacency in the perfect goodnes, congruity and rectitude of his own moſt Holy Will and Way.

And again, as he doth not ſeek a yet-unattained ſatisfaction, in any end he can be ſuppoſed to propound to himſelf; So nor can he be thought to deliberate, as we are wont to do, concerning the means of effecting any. For deliberation would imply doubtfulnes and uncertainty, which his abſolute Perfection cannot admit;

mit; Nor doth need, the whole frame and compaſs of things intended by him, in their diſtinct references and tendencies, being, at once, preſent to his all-comprehending view; ſo that there can be no place for any intermediate knowledg with him, or for any new reſolves thereupon.

Acts 15. *Known to the Lord are all his Works from the beginning of the World.*

§. XI. This being premiſed; It is now further to be conſidered, that howſoever one end oftentimes is not attained, unto which the publicly extant declarations of the Divine Will have a viſible aptitude, *viz. the obedient compliance of men with them*; another, more noble end was, however, attainable, not unbecoming the deſignment of the Divine Wiſdom, and which it

it was every way moſt worthy of God to be more principally intent upon.

It is fit the mention of this be prefac't with an obvious remark; That the miſapprehenſion of the ſtate of things between God and Man doth, in great part, owe it ſelf, to our aptnes to compare unduly, the Divine Government with that of Secular Rulers; and our expectation to find them in all things agreeing with each other. Whereas there cannot but be a vaſt difference, between the *conſtitution*, and *end* of God's Government over (his Creatures, and more eſpecially) Mankind, and that of Man over his fellow Creatures of the ſame kind.

The Government of ſecular, humane Rulers, can never be, in the conſtitution of it, altogether

abſolute, nor ought, in the deſign of it, primarily to intend the perſonal advantage of the Ruler himſelf, who as much depends upon his Subjects, and hath (at leaſt) as great need of them, as they can be underſtood to have of him. But as to the Bleſſed God the matter is apparent, and hath its own triumphant evidence, that ſince he is the Original and Root of all Being, that all things are meer dependencies upon his abſolute pleaſure, and entirely of him, and by him, all
Ro. 11. ought to be to him that he alone might have the glory.

Wherefore, it muſt be aſſerted, and cannot fail of obtaining to be acknowledged, by every impartial, and ſober conſiderer of things, that there is a much more noble and important end, that all

all God's public Edicts, and Declarations to men (the inſtruments of his Government over them) do more principally aim at, than their advantage, *viz. the dignity and decorum of his Government it ſelf.* And that he may be found in every thing to have done as became him, and was moſt worthy of himſelf. And what could be more ſo, than that he ſhould teſtifie the averſion of his own Pure, and Holy Nature, to whatſoever was unholy and impure, his love of righteouſnes and complacency to be imitated herein, together with his ſteady, gracious Propenſion to receive all them into the communion of his own Felicity or Bleſſednes (for the Redeemer's ſake) who ſhould herein comply with him?

Nor are we to underſtand that

he herein ſo deſigns the reputation of his Government, as men are often wont to do things out of deſign for their intereſt, *in that kind*, that are *otherwiſe*, againſt their (over-ruled) inclination. But we are to account theſe his declarations (altho they are acts of an intelligent Agent, and the products of wiſdom and counſel, yet alſo) the ſpontaneous emanations of his own holy, and gracious Nature, ſuch as wherein he moſt fully agrees, and conſents with himſelf. And is it now to be expected, that, becauſe he foreſees men will be wicked, and do what ſhall be unworthy of them, he muſt therefore lay aſide his Nature, and omit to do what ſhall be worthy of himſelf?

§. XII. And hereupon it may be expected,

pected, the more ingenuous, and candid, will allow themſelves to think the matter tolerably clear, in reference to the former part of the propoſed difficulty; *i.e.* will apprehend this way of dealing with men *not imprudent*, or inconſiſtent with the *Divine Wiſdom*, ſince, tho one end, in a great part, fail, yet another, more valuable, is attained.

But yet, as to the latter part, the difficulty may ſtill urge, *viz.* how it can ſtand with ſinceritie, whereas that end alſo which failes, ſeems to have been moſt directly intended, that the Bleſſed God ſhould ſeem ſo earneſtly intent upon it. Since it is hardly conceiveable, that the ſame thing ſhould be, at once, ſeriouſly intended as an end, and yet, at the ſame time, give the eye, which

ſeems

ſeems to deſign it ; no other proſpect, than of a thing never to be brought to paſs.

Wherefore we are next to conſider, that we may proceed gradually, And not omit to ſay what is in it ſelf conſiderable ; tho it is not all (which cannot be ſaid at once)that is to be ſaid ; That the public declarations of the Divine Will, touching man's duty, do attain that very end [his obedient compliance therewith] in great part, and as to many (altho it be foreknown they will prove ineffectual with the moſt) and are the no leſs ſucceſsful, than the apt means of attaining it.

Nor, certainly, if it were foreknown the World would be ſo divided,as that ſome would obey, and others not obey,was it therefore the fitteſt courſe, that theſe

two

two ſorts ſhould, by ſome extraordinary act of Providence, be carefully ſevered from each other; and *thoſe* be dealt withal apart from the reſt: But rather, that the Divine Edicts ſhould be of an univerſal tenour, and be directed to all as they are; the matter of them being of univerſal concernment, and eqally ſutable to the common caſe of all men.

§. XIII. Neither yet was it neceſſary, that effectual care ſhould be taken, they ſhould actually reach all, and be apply'd to every individual perſon. Since it is apparently to be reſolved into the wickednes of the World, that they do not ſo; and that there is not an univerſal diffuſion of the Goſpel into every part.

For it being evident to any ones re-

reflection, that men are in a ſtate of apoſtacy and defection from their Maker and common Lord, and therefore ſubject to his diſpleaſure; Whereas the Merciful God hath done his own part, and ſo much beyond what was to be expected from him; iſſued out his Proclamations of Peace, and Pardon, upon ſo eaſie and indulgent terms, as are expreſſed in his Goſpel; if, hereupon, men alſo did their part, behaved themſelves ſutably to the exigencie of their caſe, and as did become reaſonable Creatures, faln under the diſpleaſure of their Maker, (whereof their common condition affords ſo innumerable, ſo pregnant proofs) The Goſpel, whereſoever it ſhould arrive, would have been entertained with ſo great a tranſport of joy,

and

and ſo ready and univerſal acceptance, as very ſoon to have made a great noiſe in the World: And being found to be of an univerſal tenour and concernment, and that what it ſaies to one Nation, it eqally ſaies the ſame to every one; It could not but be, that Meſſengers would interchangeably have run from Nation, to Nation; ſome to communicate, others to enqire after thoſe ſtrange tidings of great joy unto all people, lately ſent from Heaven; concerning the *Emmanuel*, God with us; God, again upon his return to Man, and *now in Chriſt reconciling the World to himſelf*. And thus how eaſily, and *even naturally*, would the Goſpel ſoon have ſpread it ſelf thorough the World? Eſpecially the merciful God having ſo provided,

ded, that there ſhould be an office conſtituted, and ſet up; a ſort of men, whoſe whole buſineſs it ſhould be, to propagate, and publiſh thoſe happy tidings.

But that men ſhould ſo indulge their ſenſual, terrene inclination, as not at all to uſe their underſtandings, and conſidering power, about other matters than only what are within the ſight of their eye, when by ſo eaſie and qick a turn of thoughts they might *feel and find out* who made them, and was the Original of their life and being, and that things are not right, and as they ſhould be, between him and them; and ſo by what is within the compaſs of natural revelation, be prepared for what is ſuper-natural. And not that only, but to that ſtupidity, by which they are unapt to

enqire

enqire after, and receive, to adde that obſtinate malignity, by which they are apt to reject, and oppoſe the merciful diſcoveries, and overtures of their offended, reconcileable Creatour, and Lord: How manifeſtly doth this devolve the whole buſineſs, of the little, ſlow progreſs of the Goſpel in the World, upon themſelves only!

As ſuppoſe we a Prince of the greateſt Clemency, Benignity, and Goodnes, from whom a whole Countrey of his Subjects have made a moſt cauſeleſs defection; hereupon to ſend, to the whole Body of the Rebels, a gracious Proclamation of free Pardon, upon their return to their allegiance, and duty; and it only from hence comes to paſs, that every individual perſon of them, diſtinctly underſtands not what the

the Meſſage from their Prince did import; becauſe, they that heard it would not, many of them, allow themſelves to conſider and regard it; and others of them, with deſpiteful violence, fell upon the Heraulds, barbarouſly butchering ſome of them, and ignominiouſly repulſing the reſt. Who would not ſay, that Prince had fully done his part, and acqitted himſelf anſwerably to the beſt Character, tho he ſhould ſend to the Rebels no further overtures. Much more, if, thorough a long tract of time, he continue the ſame amicable endeavours for their reducement; notwithſtanding the conſtant experience of the ſame ill ſucceſs? Who would not caſt the whole buſines of the continued ill underſtanding, between him,

him, and the revolters, upon themſelves. And reckon it impoſſible, any ſhould be ignorant, of his kind and benign inclinations and intentions, if an implacable enmity, and diſaffection to him, and his Government, were not their common temper?

Tho, ſo infinitely do the Mercies of God, exceed thoſe of the moſt Merciful Prince on Earth, as well as his knowledg and power; that whereſoever there are any exempt caſes, we muſt conceive him, eqally able, and inclined, to conſider them diſtinctly. And ſo vaſtly different, may we well ſuppoſe, the degrees of happines and miſery to be, in the other World; as that there may be latitude enough, of puniſhing and rewarding men, proportionably to the degrees of light

they have had, and the more or leſs malignity, or propenſion to reconciliation, was found with them thereupon.

§. XIV. Nor again was it at all incongruous, or unbecoming, that the Bleſſed God, this being the common temper, and diſpoſition of all men, to reject his gracious tenders, ſhould provide, by ſome extraordinary means, that they might not be finally rejected by all. For what can be more appropriate to Sovereignty (even where it is infinitely leſs abſolute) than, arbitrarily, to deſign the objects of ſpecial favour? Who blames a Prince, for placing ſpecial marks of his Royal bounty, or clemency here and there, as he thinkes fit? or that he hath ſome peculiar favourites, with whom

whom he familiarly converſes, whom he hath won, by ſome or other not-common inducements, and aſſured their loyal affection: tho there be thouſands of Perſons in his dominions beſides, of as good parts, diſpoſitions, and deſerts as they? It belongs to Sovereignty, only ſo, to be favourable to ſome, as, in the mean time, to be juſt towards all.

Yea and it muſt be acknowledged, ſuch are the diſpenſations of the holy God towards the whole community of mankind, as import, not only ſtrict righteouſneſs, but great clemency and mercie alſo.

Tho they might eaſily underſtand themſelves to be offenders, and liable to the ſeverities of his Juſtice, they are ſpared by his patience, ſuſtained by his bounty,

protected by his power, Their lives and properties are fenced by his own lawes. And whereas they are become very dangerous enemies to one another: and each one his own greateſt enemie; It is provided by thoſe laws, even for the worſt of men, that none ſhall injure them, that all love them, and ſeek their good. He interpoſes his authority on their behalf; and, if any wrong them, he takes it for an affront done to himſelf. By the ſame lawes, they are directed to induſtry, frugality, Sobriety, temperance, to exerciſe a Government over themſelves, to bridle and ſubdue their own exorbitant luſts and paſſions, their more immediate tormentours, and the ſources of all the calamities and miſeries, which befal them in this World.

By

By all which evidences of his great care, and concern for their welfare, They might underſtand him to have favourable propenſions towards them, and that, tho they have offended him, he is not their implacable enemy; And might, by his goodnes, be led to repentance.

Yea and moreover; he hath ſent them a Redeemer, his own Son, an incarnate Deity, who came down into this World, full of grace and truth, upon the moſt merciful errand. (And they have ſome of them been in tranſports, when they have but fancy'd ſuch a deſcent, for the doing them, only, ſome lighter good turn; as upon the cure of the Creeple. *The Gods* (ſay they) *are come down in the likeneſs of Men!*) Act. 14.

He being filled with the glo-

rious fulnes of the Godhead, hath been a voluntary ſacrifice for the ſins of men ; And if they would beleive and obey him, they would find that ſacrifice is accepted, and available for them.

And tho they are diſabled to do ſo, only by their own wicked inclination, even againſt that alſo they have no cauſe to deſpair of being relieved, if they would (which they might) admit the thoughts of their impotency, and the exigencie of their caſe, and did ſeriouſly implore Divine help.

XV. Now with whom theſe methods ſucceed well, there is no ſuſpicion of inſinceritie ; Let us ſee what pretence there can be for it, with the reſt.

It is to be conſidered, that, as to them, he doth not apply himſelf

ſelf to every (or to any) perſon immediately, and ſeverally, after ſome ſuch tenour of ſpeech as this, " I know thee to be a " profligate, hopeles wretch,and " that thou wilt finally diſregard " whatſoever I ſay to thee, and " conſeqently periſh and become " miſerable. But however (tho " I foreſee moſt certainly thou " wilt not, yet) I entreat thee " to hear, and obey, and live. Indeed ſending a Prophet to a promiſcuous people, he foretells him of ſuch ill ſucceſs *. But it is not told him he ſhould ſucceed ſo ill univerſally, and it is imply'd, he ſhould not. †

*Ezekiel. Ch. 3. 7.

†V. 21.

But the Courſe the great God takes, is only to apply himſelf to theſe (as hath been ſaid) in common with the reſt. For if it be ſaid he alſo applies himſelf to

them by the private dictates of his Spirit; He doth not, by it, make formed ſpeeches to men. But as to thoſe its common motions, whereby it applies it ſelf unto them, doth only ſolicite, in a ſtated manner of operation, in and by their own reaſon and conſciences (as he concurres with our inferiour faculties, and with the inferiour Creatures, ſutably to their natures and capacities) ſpeaking no other, than their own language, as they are inſtructed out of his Word, or by other means. Which he uſually continues to do, till, by their reſiſtencies, they have ſealed up their own Conſciences, and conſeqently (according to its more ordinary fixed courſe, and lawes of acceſs and receſs) ſhut out the Holy Spirit both at once. Nor is it

more

more to be expected, he ſhould *univerſally* alter that courſe; than that he ſhould alter the courſes of the Sun, Moon, and Stars, and innovate upon univerſal nature.

So that what is endeavoured for the reducement of ſuch, as finally refuſe to return, by particular applications to this or that perſon, and beyond what is contained in the public declarations of his written Word, is by ſubſtituted Miniſters, and inferiour Agents, that know no more of the event, than they do themſelves.

And that this was the fitteſt way of dealing with reaſonable Creatures, who, that will uſe his own reaſon, ſees not?

That our diſqiſition may be here §. XVI.

here a little more ſtrict, we ſhall enqire both,

What may be ſuppoſed poſſible to be alledg'd out of God's Word, in reference to them that perſiſt in wickedneſs till they finally periſh, which it can be thought not conſiſtent with ſinceritie to have inſerted, upon the ſuppoſed foreſight of ſo diſmal an iſſue.

And what more convenient courſe we can think of, which ſincerity (as we apprehend) *would have required.*

As to the former. It may, perhaps, be alledg'd, that he profeſ-
1 Tim. 2. 4. ſes *to will the ſalvation of all men.*
Ezek. 18. 32. Not to deſire the death *of him that dyeth.* Yea and profeſſes himſelf
Pſ. 81. 12, 13. grieved that any periſh. Now theſe things, compared with his public declarations, and tenders, directed, in an univerſal tenour,

to

to all men, carry that appearance and ſhew with them, as if he would have it believ'd, his end were to ſave all. Wherewith his foreſight of the perdition of ſo many, ſeems ill to agree. For, how can that end be ſeriouſly intended, which it is foreſeen will not be brought about? And how can it be thought to conſiſt with ſincerity, that there ſhould be an appearance of his having ſuch an end, unto which, a *ſerious real* intention of it doth not correſpond?

Wherefore we ſhall here examine, what *appearance* ſuch expreſſions as thoſe above recited, can, by juſt interpretation, be underſtood to amount unto.

And then ſhew that there is *really* with the Bleſſed God, what doth truly and fully correſpond

to

to that appearance. And very agreeably too, with the hypotheſis of his foreſeeing how things will finally iſſue, with very many.

And firſt, that we may underſtand the true import of the expreſſions which we have mentioned, and others of like ſound and meaning. We are to conſider, that (tho being taken ſeverally and apart, they are not capable of a ſenſe, prejudicial to the cauſe, the defence whereof we have undertaken, which we ſhall afterwards more diſtinctly evince, yet) it were very injurious, to go about to affix a ſenſe, unto a ſingle expreſſion, without weighing the general deſign of the writings, whereof it is a part.

It were qite to fruſtrate the uſe of words, when a matter is

to

to be repreſented, that is copious, and conſiſts of many parts and branches; which cannot be comprehended in one, or a few ſentences, if we will pretend to eſtimate, and make a judgment of the Speakers full meaning, by this or that ſingle paſſage, only, becauſe we have not patience, or leaſure, to hear the reſt; or perhaps have a greater diſpoſition to cavil his words, than underſtand his meaning.

If a Courſe reſembling this ſhould be taken, in interpreting the Edicts, or Lawes of Princes, and States (ſuppoſe it were a Proclamation of Pardon to delinqent Subjects) and only this or that favourable clauſe be faſtened upon, without regard to the inſerted Proviſo's and Conditions; The (concerned) interpreters might

might do a ſlight, temporary, and eaſily remedible wrong to the Prince; but are in danger, more fatally, to wrong themſelves.

The Edicts of the great God, that are publicly extant to Mankind (the univerſal publication whereof, they partly withſtand, and which they too commonly deprave, and perverſly miſ-interpret, where they do obtain) carry no ſuch appearance with them, as if he had ever propoſed it to himſelf, for his end, to ſave all men, or any man, let them do what they pleaſe, or how deſtructive a Courſe ſoever they take, and ſhall finally perſiſt in.

If that were ſuppoſed his deſign, his ſo ſeemingly ſerious counſels, and exhortations, were as ludicrous, as they could be thought, if it were as peremptorily

rily determined all ſhould periſh. For what God will, by Almighty Power, immediatly work, without the ſubordinate concurrence of any ſecond cauſe, muſt be *neceſſarily*. And it is eqally vain, ſolicitouſly to endeavour the engaging of ſubordinate Agents, to do that which *without them* is *abſolutely neceſſary*, as it were to endeavour that, *by them*, which is *abſolutely impoſſible*.

That which his declarations to men do amount unto, is, in ſumme, thus much, That, whereas they have, by their defection, and revolt from him, made themſelves liable to his Juſtice, and very great conſeqent miſeries; he is willing to pardon, ſave and reſtore them to a bleſſed ſtate, upon ſuch terms as ſhall be agreeable §.XVII.

able (the recompence due to his injured Law, being otherwiſe provided for, at no expence of theirs) to the nature of that Bleſſednes they are to enjoy, the Purity of his own Nature, and the Order, and Dignity of his Government. That is, that they ſeriouſly repent, and turn to him, Love him as the Lord their God, with all their Heart and Soul, and Might, and Mind; and one another as themſelves. (being to make together one happy Community, in the participation of the ſame Bleſſednes) Commit themſelves by entire Truſt, ſubjection and devotednes to their great and merciful Redeemer, according to the meaſure of light, wherewith he ſhall have been revealed and made known to them; Submit to the motions and dictates of his

Bleſſed

Bleſſed Spirit, whereby the impreſſion of his own holy Image is to be renewed in them, and a Divine Nature imparted to them; And carefully attend to his Word as the means, the impreſſive inſtrument or ſeal, by which, underſtood and conſidered, that impreſſion ſhall be made, and the very ſeed out of which that Holy Nature, and the entire frame of the New Creature ſhall reſult and ſpring up in them; ſo as to make them apt unto the obedience that is expected from them, and capable of the Bleſſednes they are to expect. That if they neglect to attend to theſe external diſcoveries, and refuſe the ordinary aids and aſſiſtances of his good Spirit, and offer violence to their own Conſciences, they are not to expect he ſhould over-power them,

by a ſtrong hand, and ſave them againſt the continuing diſ-inclination of their own wills.

Nor (whatſoever extraordinary acts he may do upon ſome, to make them willing) is there any univerſal Promiſe in his Word; or other encouragement, upon which any may reaſonably promiſe themſelves that; in the neglect and diſuſe of all ordinary means, ſuch power ſhall be uſed with them, as ſhall finally overcome their averſe diſaffected hearts.

§. XVIII. 'Tis true that he freqently uſes much importunity with men, and enforces his Lawes with that earneſtnes, as if it were his own great intereſt to have them obey'd; Wherein, having to do with men, he doth like a man, ſolicitouſly intent

intent upon an end which he cannot be ſatisfy'd till he attain. Yet withal, he hath interſperſed, every where in his Word, ſo freqent, God-like Expreſſions of his own Greatnes, All-ſufficiency and Independency upon his Creatures, as that if we attend to theſe his Public declarations, and manifeſts of himſelf *entirely*; So as to compare one thing with another, we ſhall find the matter not at all diſſembled; but might collect *this* to be the ſtate of things, between him, and us; that he makes no overtures to us, as thinking us conſiderable, or as if any thing were to accrue to him from us. But that, as he takes pleaſure in the diffuſion of his own goodnes, ſo it is our intereſt to behave our ſelves ſutably thereunto, and, according as we comply with it,

and continue in it, or do not, ſo we may expect the delectable communications of it, or taſt, otherwiſe, his juſt ſeverity. That, therefore, when he exhorts, obteſts, intreats, beſeeches that we would obey and live; ſpeaks as if he were grieved at our diſobedience, and what is like to enſue to us therefrom; Theſe are merciful condeſcentions, and the efforts of that goodnes, which chooſeth the fitteſt wayes of *moving us*, rather than that he is *moved himſelf*, by any ſuch Paſſions, as we are wont to feel in our ſelves, when we are purſuing our own deſigns. And that he vouchſafeth to ſpeak in ſuch a way as is leſs ſutable *to himſelf*, that it may be more ſutable *to us*, and might teach us, while he ſo far complies with us, how becoming it is that we

we anſwerably bend our ſelves to a compliance with him. He ſpeaks, ſometimes, as if he did *ſuffer ſomewhat humane*, as an apt means (and which to many proves effectual) to bring us to *enjoy*, at length, *what is truly divine*. We may, if we conſider, and lay things together, underſtand theſe to be gracious inſinuations; Whereby, as he hath not left the matter liable to be ſo miſ-underſtood, as if he were really affected with ſolicitude, or any perturbation concerning us (which he he hath ſufficiently given us to underſtand his Bleſſed Nature cannot admit of.) So nor can they be thought to be diſguiſes of himſelf, or miſrepreſentations, that have nothing in him correſponding to them. For they really ſignifie the obedience, and

bleſſednes of thoſe his Creatures that are capable thereof, to be more pleaſing and agreeable to his Nature, and Will; than that they ſhould diſobey and periſh. (which is the utmoſt that can be underſtood meant, by thoſe words, *God will have all men to be ſaved and come to the knowledg of the truth*) But withal, that he ſo apprehends the indignity done to his Government, by their diſobedience, that if they obey not (as the indulgent conſtitution and temper of his Law, and Government now are, in and by the Redeemer) they muſt periſh. And that he hath alſo ſuch reſpect to the congruity and order of things, as that it ſhall not be the ordinary method of his Government over reaſonable Creatures, to over-power them into that obedience,

dience, by which it may come to paſs that they periſh not. All which may be collected from thoſe his own plain words, in that other recited Text (and many beſides of like import.) When, with ſo awful ſolemnity, he profeſſes, that *as he lives he takes no pleaſure in the death of ſinners, but that they may turn and live*; and adds, *Turn ye, turn ye, why will you die?* That is, that their repentance, and conſeqent welfare, would be *more grateful* to him, than their perdition, upon their perſevering in deſtructive waies. But yet, that if they were not moved to repent, by theſe his pleadings and expoſtulations uſed with them, they *ſhould die*, and were therefore concern'd, to attend and hearken, to ſuch his reaſonings and warnings, as the apt Ezek. 33.

means to work their good; not expecting he ſhould take extraordinary courſes with them, in order to it. And that the *real reſpect* he had thereunto, ſhould never induce him, to uſe any indecorous courſe, to bring it about; but that he had a more principal reſpect to the rules of Juſtice, and the order of his Government, than to their concernments. And that he, notwithſtanding, expreſſes himſelf aggrieved that any finally periſh; If we conſider and recollect, what notices he hath furniſhed our Minds with, of the Perfections of a Deity, and what he hath remonſtrated to us of his own Nature, ſo plainly, in his Word; we cannot underſtand more by it, than the calm diſpaſſionate reſentment and diſlike, which moſt perfect Purity, and

Good-

Goodnes have, of the ſinfulnes and miſerable ruine, of his own Creatures.

In all which we have a moſt unexceptionable *Idæa* of God, and may behold the comly *conjuncture* of his large Goodnes, ſtrict Righteouſnes, and moſt accurate Wiſdom all together. As we are alſo concerned, in making our eſtimate of his waies, to conſider them. And not to take our meaſure of what is ſutable to God, by conſidering him according to one ſingle Attribute only; but as they all are united, in his moſt Perfect *Being*. And in that bleſſed harmony, as not to infer with him a difficulty what to do, or what not. Which ſometimes falls out with men, where there is an imperfect reſemblance of thoſe Divine Excellencies, not ſo exactly

actly contempered together. As it was with that *Spartan* Prince and General in *Plutarch*, when, finding a neceſſity to march his Army, and taking notice of one, for whom he had a peculiar kindneſs, that, thorough extream weaknes, was not poſſibly to be removed, he look't back upon him, expreſsing his ſenſe of that exigencie, in thoſe emphatical words, *How hard a matter is it at once* ἐλεεῖν καὶ φρονεῖν, *to exerciſe pity and be wiſe!*

God's own Word miſrepreſents him not, but gives a true account of him, if we allow our ſelves to confer it with it ſelf, one part of it with another. Nor doth any part of it, taken alone, import him ſo to have will'd the happines of men, for any end of his, that he reſolved he would, *by whatſoever means* certainly effect it;

it; As we are wont, many times, with ſuch eagernes to purſue ends upon which we are intent, as not to conſider of right or wrong, fit or unfit in our purſuit of them, and ſo let the coſt of our means, not ſeldom, eat up our end. Nor did that belong to him, or was his part as our moſt benign, wiſe, and righteous Governour, to provide that we ſhould certainly not tranſgreſs, or not ſuffer prejudice thereby; but that we ſhould not do ſo, thorough his omiſſion of any thing, which it became him to do to prevent it.

§. XIX. It may therefore be of ſome Uſe further to take notice, that a very divers conſideration muſt be had, of the *ends which ſhall be effected by Gods own action only*, and *of thoſe which are to be brought about* (in

(in concurrence, and ſubordination to his own) *by the intervenient action of his Creatures*. Eſpecially (which is more to our purpoſe) ſuch of them as are intelligent, and capable of being govern'd by Lawes.

As to the former ſort of theſe ends, we may be confident they were all moſt abſolutely intended, and can never fail of being accompliſht.

For the latter, It cannot be univerſally ſaid ſo. For *theſe*, being not entirely his ends, But partly his, and partly preſcribed by him, to his reaſonable Creatures, to be theirs. We are to conceive he alwaies, moſt abſolutely, intends to do, what he righteouſly eſteems congruous, ſhould be his own part; which he extends and limits, as ſeems good unto

unto him. And ſometimes, of his own good Pleaſure, aſſumes to himſelf the doing of ſo much, as ſhall aſcertain the end; Effectually procuring, that his Creature ſhall do his part alſo. That is, not only enacts his Law, and adds exhortations, warnings, promiſes, to enforce it, but alſo emits that effectual influence, whereby the inferiour wheels ſhall be put into motion, the powers and faculties of his governed Creature excited and aſſiſted, and (by a ſpirit in the wheels) made as the Chariots of a willing people. At other times and in other inſtances, he doth leſs, and meeting with reſiſtence, ſooner retires; follows not his external Edicts and Declarations, with ſo potent and determinative an influence; but that the Creature,

Creature, through his own great default, may omit to do his part, and ſo *that end* be not effected.

That the courſe of his Oeconomy towards men on earth is, *de facto*, ordered with this diverſity, ſeems out of qeſtion. Manifeſt experience ſhews it. Some do ſenſibly perceive that motive influence, which others do not. The ſame perſons, at ſometimes, find not that, which at other times they do. His own Word plainly aſſerts it. *He works in us to will and to do, of his own good pleaſure. Where he will, he*, in this reſpect, *ſhews mercy; where he will, he hardeneth*, or doth not prevent but that men be hardened. And indeed, we ſhould be conſtrain'd to raſe out a great part of the Sacred Volume, if we ſhould not admit it to be ſo.

And

And as the eqity and fitnes of his making ſuch difference (when it appears he doth make it) cannot without profanenes be doubted, ſo it is evident, from what was before ſaid, they are far removed from the reach and confines of any reaſonable doubt; ſince he forſakes none, but being firſt forſaken.

Nor have men any pretence to complain of ſubdolous dealing, or that they are ſurpriſingly diſappointed, and lurcht of ſuch help, as they might have expected; inaſmuch as this is ſo plainly extant in God's open manifeſts to the World, that he uſes a certain arbitrarines, eſpecially in the more exuberant diſpenſation of his grace; and is inſerted to that purpoſe, that they may be caution'd not to neglect lower aſſiſtences;

ſtences; and warned, becauſe he
Phil. 2. 12,13. *works to will and to do of his own pleaſure*, therefore *to work out their own ſalvation with fear and trembling*. Whereupon, elſewhere, after the moſt perſuaſive alluring
Prov. 1. invitations. *Turn ye at my reproof, I will pour out my Spirit to you, I will make known my words to you*, It is preſently ſubjoyned, *Becauſe I called and ye refuſed, I ſtretched out my hand and no man regarded. But ye have ſet at nought all my counſel, and would none of my reproof; I alſo will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh.*

From all which it is plainly to be underſtood, that the general ſtrain and drift of God's external revelation of his Mind to Man, in his Word, and the aſpect of even thoſe paſſages, that can, with moſt colour, be thought to ſignify any

any thing further, do amount to nothing more than this, that he doth ſo far *really will* the ſalvation of all, as not to omit the doing that which may effect it, if they be not neglectful of themſelves, but not ſo as to effect it by that extraordinary exertion of Power, which he thinks fit to employ upon ſome others.

Nor is it reaſonably to be doubted, (*ſuch a will* being all that can be pretended to be the viſible meaning of the paſſages before noted) whether there be ſuch a Will in God or no. And ſo ſomewhat really correſponding (the next thing promiſed to be diſcourſed) to the aſpect and appearance hereof, which is offered to our view. For what ſhould be the reaſon of the doubt? He, who beſt underſtands his own Nature, S. XX.

having ſaid of himſelf what imports no leſs; why ſhould we make a difficulty to believe him? Nor indeed can any notices we have of the Perfections of the Divine Nature be leſs liable to doubt, than what we have of *his unchangeable veracity*; whence, as it is *impoſſible* to him to lye, it muſt be *neceſſary*, that he be *really willing* of what he hath *repreſented* himſelf ſo to be.

I muſt here profeſs my diſlike of the terms of that common diſtinction the *voluntas beneplaciti, et ſigni* in this preſent caſe. Under which, ſuch as coyned, and thoſe that have much uſed it, have only rather, I doubt not, conceal'd a good meaning, than expreſſed by it an *ill one*. It ſeems, I confeſs, by its more obvious aſpect, too much to countenance the

the ignominious ſlander, which profane and atheiſtical diſpoſitions would faſten upon God, and the courſe of his procedure towards men; and which it is the deſign of theſe Papers to evince of as much abſurdity and folly, as it is guilty of impiety and wickednes: As tho he only intended to *ſeem willing* of what he really was not; That there was an appearance to which nothing did *ſubeſſe*. And then why is the latter call'd *voluntas*? unleſs the meaning be he did only will the *ſign*, which is falſe and impious; and if it were true, did he not will it with the will of *good pleaſure*? And then the members of the diſtinction are confounded. Or, as if the evil actions of men were, more truly, the objects of his good Pleaſure, than

their forbearance of them.

And of theſe faults the application of the diſtinction of God's *ſecret Will*, and *revealed*, unto this caſe, tho it be uſeful in many, is as guilty.

§. XXI. The truth is (unto which we muſt eſteem our ſelves obliged to adhere, both by our aſſent, and defence) that God doth *really* and *complacentially* will (and therefore doth with moſt unexceptionable ſincerity declare himſelf to will) that *to be done and enjoy'd by many men*, which he doth not, univerſally, will *to make them do, or irreſiſtibly procure that they ſhall enjoy*. Which is no harder aſſertion, than that the impure will of degenerate ſinful Man is oppoſite to the Holy Will of God; and the malignity of Man's will to the benignity of his. No harder

der than that there is ſin and miſery in the World, which how can we conceive otherwiſe, than as a repugnancie to the good and acceptable Will of God?

Methinks it ſhould not be difficult to us to acknowledg, that God doth *truly*, and *with complacencie*, will, whatſoever is the holy righteous matter of his own Lawes. And if it ſhould be with any a difficulty, I would only make this ſuppoſition. What if all the World were yet in innocencie, yielding entire, univerſal obedience to all the now extant Laws of God, which have not reference to Man as now faln (as thoſe of repentance, Faith in a Mediatour, &c.) would it now be a doubt with any, Whether God did truly and really *will*, and were *pleaſed with* the

holines and righteouſnes which were every where to be found in the World? Surely we would not, in this caſe, imagine the creatures will more pure and holy than the Divine; or that he were diſpleaſed with men for their being righteous and holy. Now again ſuppoſe the World revolted, what then is that holy Will of God changed? will we not ſay it remains the ſame holy Will ſtill? And ſtands the ſame Rule of righteouſnes and duty that it was? Doth the change of his Rebel-Creatures infer any with him? Or do only the *declarations* of his former Will remain to be their rule, and keep them ſtill obliged, *his Will it ſelf* being become another from what it was? Surely he might as eaſily have changed his Lawes.

And

And if we ſay his Will is changed, how ſhould we know it to be ſo? *If we know it not*, ſurely ſuch a thing ſhould not be ſaid or thought. *If we knew it*, how ſhould thoſe yet-extant Lawes and Declarations continue to oblige, *againſt the Law-givers known will?* And then the eaſie expedient to nullifie the obligation of a Law, that were thought too reſtrictive, were to diſobey it. And men might, by ſinning once, licenſe themſelves to do the ſame thing (tho then we could not call it ſinning) alwaies. And ſo the Creatures ſhould be the ſupream, and ruling will. Nor had it been a falſe ſuggeſtion, but a real truth, that Man, by becoming a ſinner, might make himſelf a God.

Or, if it ſhall be thought fit to

ſay, that the Divine Will would not, in that ſuppoſed caſe, be ſaid to be changed; but only, that now, the event makes it appear not to have been, what we thought it was; That were to impute both impuritie and diſsimulation to the Holy Bleſſed God, as his fixed Attributes. And what we thought unfit, and ſhould abhorre, to imagine might have place with him one moment, to affix to him for perpetuitie.

§. XXII. And whereas it may be thought to follow hence, that hereby we aſcribe to God a liablenes to fruſtration, and diſappointment. That is without pretence. The reſolve of the Divine Will, in this matter, being not concerning the event *what Man ſhall do*, But con-

concerning his duty *what he ſhould*, and concerning the connection between his duty, and his happines. Which, we ſay, he doth not only ſeem to will, but wills it really and truly. Nor would his Preſcience of the event, which we all this while aſſert, let fruſtration be ſo much as poſſible to him. Eſpecially, it being at once foreſeen, that his Will, being croſſed in this, would be fulfilled in ſo important a thing, as the preſerving the decorum of his own Government. Which had been moſt apparently blemiſht, beyond what could conſiſt with the Perfections of the Deity, if either his Will concerning Man's duty, or the declarations of that Will, had not been ſubſtantially, the ſame that they are.

We

We are, therefore, in aſſigning the object of this or that act of the Divine Will, to do it *entirely*, and to take the whole object together, without dividing it, as if the Will of God did wholly terminate upon what indeed is but a part (and eſpecially if that be but a leſs conſiderable part) of the thing willed. In the preſent caſe, we are not to conceive that God, *only*, wills either Man's duty or felicity, or that herein his Will doth ſolely and ultimately terminate. But, in the whole, the determination of God's Will is, *That Man ſhall be duly governed, that is, congruouſly both to himſelf, and him. That ſuch and ſuch things, moſt congruous to both, ſhall be Man's duty, by his doing whereof, the Dignity and Honour of God's own Government*

vernment might be preſerved, which was the thing principally to be deſign'd; and in the firſt place. And, as what was ſecundary thereto, that hereby Man's felicity ſhould be provided for. Therefore, it being foreſeen a violation would be done to the ſacred rights of the Divine Government, by Man's diſobedience, it is reſolved, they ſhall be repaired and maintained by other means. So that the Divine Will hath its effect; as to what was its more noble and principal deſign, the other part failing, only, by his default, whoſe is the loſs.

And if yet it ſhould be inſiſted, that in aſſerting God to will what by his Lawes he hath made become Man's duty, even where it is not done, we ſhall herein aſcribe to him, at leaſt, an *ineffectual*

fectual and an *imperfect Will*, as which doth not bring to paſs the thing willed.

It is anſwered, that imperfection were with no pretence imputable to the Divine Will, meerly for its not effecting every thing, whereto it may have a *real* propenſion. But it would be more liable to that imputation, if it ſhould effect any thing, which it were *leſs fit* for him to effect, than not to effect it. The abſolute Perfection of his Will ſtands in the *proportion*, which every act of it bears, to the importance of the things, about which it is converſant. Even as, with men, the perfection of any act of will is to be eſtimated, not by the meer peremptory ſturdines of it, but by its proportion to the goodnes of the thing willed. Upon which account,

account, a meer *velleity* (as many love to ſpeak) when the degree of goodnes in the object claims no more, hath unconceivably greater perfection in it, than the moſt obſtinate *Volition*.

And ſince the Event forbids us to admit that God did ever will the obedience and felicity of all, with ſuch a VVill as ſhould be effective thereof; if yet his plain Word ſhall be acknowledged the meaſure of our belief, in this matter, which ſo plainly aſſerts him *ſomeway* to will the ſalvation of all men, 'tis ſtrange if, hereupon, we ſhall not admit rather of a will *not-effective* of the thing willed, than *none at all*.

The VVill of God is ſufficiently to be vindicated from all imperfection, if he have ſufficient reaſon

reaſon for all the propenſions, and determinations of it, whether from the value of the things willed, or from his own Sovereignty who wills them.

In the preſent caſe, we need not doubt to affirm, that the obedience and felicity of all men, is of that value, as whereunto a propenſion of will, by only *ſimple complacency* is proportionable. Yet, that his not procuring, as to all (by ſuch courſes as he *more extraordinarily* takes with ſome) that they ſhall, in event, obey and be happy, is upon ſo much *more valuable* reaſons (as there will be further occaſion to ſhew ere long) as that, *not to do it* was more eligible, with the *higher complacency*, of a determinative will.

And ſince the public declarations of his good will, towards

all

all men, import no more than the former, and do plainly import ſo much; Their correſpondency to the matter declared is ſufficiently apparent.

And ſo is the congruity of both with his preſcience of the event.

For tho, when God urges and incites men, by exhortations, promiſes, and threats, to the doing of their own part (which it is moſt agreeable to his holy gracious Nature to do) he foreſee, many will not be moved thereby; but perſiſt in wilful neglect, and rebellions till they periſh: He, at the ſame time, ſees that they *might do* otherwiſe, and that, if they would comply with his methods, things would otherwiſe iſſue with them. His preſcience, no way, impoſing upon them

them a *neceſsity* to tranſgreſs. For they do it not becauſe he foreknew it, but he only foreknew it becauſe they would do ſo. And hence he had, as it was neceſſary he ſhould have, not only *this* for the object of his foreknowledg, *that they would do amiſs and periſh.* But the whole caſe in its circumſtances, *that they would do ſo, not thorough his omiſsion, but their own.* And there had been no place left for this ſtate of the caſe, if his public Edicts and Manifeſts, had not gone forth, in this tenour as they have.

So that the conſideration of his preſcience, being taken in, gives us only, in the whole, this ſtate of the Caſe, That he foreſaw men would not take that courſe, which he *truly* declared himſelf willing they ſhould (and was graciouſly ready

ready to assist them in it) in order to their own well-being. Whence all complaint of insincere dealing is left without pretence.

Nor (as we also undertook to shew) could any course (within our prospect) have been taken, that was fit, in it self, and more agreeable to sincerity. §. XXIII.

There are only these two waies to be thought on, besides. Either that God should wholly have forborn to make overtures to men in common.

Or, that he should efficaciously have overpow'red all into a compliance with them. And there is little doubt, but, upon sober consideration, both of these will be judg'd altogether unfit.

The former; Inasmuch as it

had been moſt diſagreeable *to the exact meaſures of his Government*, to let a race of ſinful Creatures perſiſt, thorough many ſucceſsive Ages, in apoſtacy and rebellion, when the characters of that Law, firſt written in Man's heart, were in ſo great meaſure outworn, and become illegible; without renewing the impreſſion, in another way; and reaſſerting his right and authority, as their Ruler and Lord; *To the Holines of his Nature*, not to ſend into the VVorld ſuch a declaration of his Will, as might be a ſtanding teſtimony againſt the impurity, whereinto it was lapſed; *To the goodnes of it*, not to make known upon what termes, and for whoſe ſake, he was reconcileable; *And to the truth of the thing*, ſince he really had ſuch kind propenſions towards men

men in common not to make them known. That it had, it ſelf, been more liable to the charge of inſinceritie, to have concealed from men what was *real truth*, and of ſo much concernment to them. And he did, in revealing them, but act his own Nature; the goodnes whereof is no more leſſened, by mens refuſal of its offers, than his Truth can be made of none effect by their disbelief of its aſſertions. Beſides the great uſe ſuch an extant revelation of the way of recovery, was to be of, to thoſe that ſhould obediently comply with it, even after they ſhould be *unwilling* ſo to do.

§. XXIV. And the latter we may alſo apprehend very unfit too; tho, becauſe that is leſs obvious, it requires to be more largely inſiſted on.

For it would ſeem that if we do not *effect* any thing which we have a real will unto, it muſt proceed from impotencie, and that we *cannot do it*, which who would ſay of the great God?

Herein, therefore, we ſhall proceed by ſteps. And gradually offer the things that follow to conſideration.

As, that it were, indeed, moſt repugnant to the notion of a Deity, to ſuppoſe any thing, which includes in it no contradiction, impoſſible to *God*, conſidered according to that *Single Attribute of Power*, only.

But yet we muſt add, That this were a very uneqal way of eſtimating what *God can do*, that is to conſider him as a *meer Being of Power*. For the notion of God ſo conceiv'd, were very inadeqate to

to him, which taken entirely, imports the *comprehenſion of all Perfections*. So that they are two very diſtant qeſtions, *What the Power of God alone could do*, And, *What God can do*. And whereas to the former the anſwer would be, *Whatſoever is not in it ſelf repugnant to be done*. To the latter, it muſt only be, *Whatſoever it becomes, or is agreeable to a Being every way perfect to do*. And ſo it is to be attributed to the *excellencie of his Nature*, if amongſt all things not ſimply impoſſible, there be any, which it may be truly ſaid *he cannot do*. Or, it proceeds not from the imperfection of his Power, but from the concurrence of all other Perfections in him. Hence his own Word plainly affirms of him, *that he cannot lye*. And by common conſent it will be ac-

knowledged, that he cannot do any unjuſt act whatſoever.

To this I doubt not we may with as common ſuffrage (when the matter is conſidered) ſubjoyn, that *his Wiſdom* doth as much limit the exerciſe of his Power, as *his Righteouſnes* or his Truth doth. And that it may with as much confidence, and clearnes, be ſaid and underſtood, that he cannot do an *unwiſe*, or imprudent act as an *unjuſt*.

Further, That as his Righteouſnes correſponds to the *Juſtice of things*, to be done or not done, ſo doth his Wiſdom to the *congruity* or fitnes. So that he cannot do what it is *unfit* for him to do, becauſe he is Wiſe; and becauſe he is moſt Perfectly & Infinitely Wiſe, therefore nothing that is *leſs-fit*. But whaſoever is *fitteſt*, when a com-

pariſon

pariſon is made between doing this or that, or between doing and not doing, *that* the Perfection of his Nature renders *neceſſary* to him, and the oppoſite part *impoſſible*.

Again, that this *meaſure* muſt be underſtood to have a very large and moſt general extent unto all the affairs of his Government, the object it concerns being ſo very large. We, in our obſervation, may take notice, that fewer qeſtions can occur concerning what is *right* or *wrong*, than what is *fit*, or *unfit*. And whereas any man may in a moment be honeſt, if he have a mind to it; very few (and that by long experience) can ever attain to be wiſe. The things about which *Juſtice* is converſant being reducible to certain rules, but *Wiſdome*

ſuppoſes very general knowledg of things ſcarce capable of ſuch reduction. And is, beſides, the primary reqiſite, in any one that bears rule over others. And muſt therefore moſt eminently influence all the managements of the Supream Ruler.

§. XXV. It is moreover to be conſidered, that innumerable congruities lie open to the Infinite Wiſdom, which are never obvious to our view or thought. As to a well-ſtudied Scholar, thouſands of coherent notions, which an illiterate perſon never thought of. To a practic't Courtier, or well-educated Gentleman, many decencies and indecencies in the matter of *civil behaviour*, and converſation, which an unbred ruſtic knowes nothing of. And to an experienced States-man, thoſe impor-

importancies, which never occur to the thoughts of him who daily follows the plough. What Government is there that hath not its *arcana*, profound myſteries and reaſons of State that a vulgar wit cannot dive into? And from whence, the account to be given, why this or that is done or not done, is not, alwaies, that it would have been *unjuſt* it ſhould be otherwiſe, but it had been *imprudent*. And many things are, hereupon, judged *neceſſary* not from the *exigencie of Juſtice*, but *reaſon of State*. Whereupon, men of modeſt and ſober minds, that have had experience of the wiſdom of their Governours, and their happy conduct, thorough a conſiderable tract of time; when they ſee things done by them, the leading reaſons whereof they do not

not underſtand, and the effect and ſucceſs comes not yet in view, ſuſpend their cenſure; while as yet all ſeems to them obſcure, and wrapt up in clouds and darknes. Yea tho the courſe that is taken have, to their apprehenſion, an ill aſpect. Accounting it becomes them not, to make a Judgment of things ſo far above their reach, and confiding in the tried wiſdom of their Rulers, who, they believe, ſee reaſons for what they do, into which they find themſelves unable to penetrate.

With how much more ſubmiſs, and humble veneration, ought the methods of the Divine Government to be beheld & adored, upon the certain aſſurance we have, that all things therein, are managed by that VViſdom, which could never in any thing miſtake

miſtake its way. VVhereas,there was never any continued adminiſtration of human Government, ſo accurate and exact,but that,after ſome tract of time, ſome or other errours might be reflected on therein.

Again, it may further be ſaid, without preſuming beyond due bounds, That tho infinite congruities muſt be ſuppoſed to lye open to the Divine Underſtanding, which are concealed from ours, yet that theſe two things in the general are very *manifeſtly congruous* to any ſober attentive Mind, that directly concern, or may be apply'd to the caſe,under our preſent conſideration, *viz.*

That the courſe of God's Government over the VVorld, be, for the moſt part,ſteady, and

and uniform; not interrupted by very freqent, extraordinary and anomalous actions. And again,

That he uſe a royal liberty, of ſtepping out of his uſual courſe, ſometimes, as he ſees meet.

It cannot but appear to ſuch as attend, highly incongruous, ſhould we affirm the *antitheſis* to either of theſe; or lay down counter-poſitions to them, and ſuppoſe the courſe of the Divine Government to be manag'd agreeably thereunto.

S.XXVI. For, *as to the former*; what confuſion would it make in the World, if there ſhould be perpetual innovations upon Nature; continual, or exceeding freqent impe-

impeditions, and reſtraints of ſecond Cauſes. *In the ſphere of Nature*, the Vertues and proper qalities of things, being never certain, could never be underſtood, or known. *In that of Policy*, no meaſures, ſo much as probable, could ever be taken. How much better is it, *in both*, that ſecond Cauſes, ordinarily follow their inclinations? And why is it not to be thought congruous, that, in ſome degree, things ſhould be proportionably ſo, *in the ſphere of Grace?* (whereto by and by we ſhall ſpeak more directly.)

We pray, when our Friends are ſick, for their recovery. What can be the ſober meaning and deſign of ſuch prayers? Not that God would work a Miracle for their reſtitution, (for then we might as well pray for their revival

vival after death) But, that God would be pleaſed ſo to co-operate, in the ſtill and ſilent way of Nature, with ſecond Cauſes, and ſo bleſs means, that they may be recovered, if he ſee good. Otherwiſe that they, and we may be prepared to undergo his Pleaſure. And agreeable hereto ought to be the intent of our Prayers, in reference to the public affairs, and better poſture of the World.

And we may take notice the Divine Wiſdom laies a very great ſtreſs upon this matter, *the preſerving of the common order of things*; and cannot but obſerve a certain inflexiblenes of Providence, herein. And, that it is very little apt to divert from its wonted courſe. At which weak minds are apt to take offence. To wonder, that, againſt ſo many prayers and tears,

tears, God will let a good man die; or one whom they love; Or that a Miracle is not wrought to prevent their own being wrong'd, at any time; Or, that the Earth doth not open and ſwallow up the perſon that hath done them wrong. Are apt to call for fire from Heaven, upon them that are otherwiſe minded, and do otherwiſe, than they would have them. But a Judicious perſon would conſider, if it be ſo highly reaſonable that my deſires ſhould be comply'd with, ſo extraordinarily, than why not all mens? And then were the VVorld filled with Prodigies and confuſion. The inconveniencies would ſoon be to all, eqally diſcernable, and intolerable (as the Heathen Poet takes notice, Should *Jupiter*'s Ear be over-

over-easy) Yea and the impossibility were obvious of gratifying all, because of their many counter desires.

And for the other, it were no less incongruous, if the Supream Power should so tie its own hands, and be so astricted to *rules and methods*, as never to do any thing extraordinary, upon never so important occasion. How ill could the World have wanted such an effort of Omnipotencie, as the restriction upon the flames from destroying *Shadrach*, *Meshach*, and *Abednego*? Or the Miracles wrought in our Saviour's and the next following Daies? Such things are never done; but when the all-comprehending Wisdom sees it *most congruous*. And that the cause will over-recompense the deflection from the common

common courſe. If no ſuch thing did ever fall out, what a Temptation were it to mankind, to introduce into their beleif an unintelligent fate inſtead of a Deity? Beſides that the convincing teſtimony were wanting, which we ſee is ſo neceſſary for the confirmation of any particular revelation from God, which comes not within the compaſs of natures diſcovery (upon which account, alſo, it is as apparently neceſſary ſuch extraordinary works ſhould not be over-frequent, for then they become ordinary, and uſeleſs to that ſpecial end) ſo that here the exertions both of the *ordinate* and *abſolute* power God (as ſome diſtinguiſh) have their ſo appropriate, and ſo viſibly apt, and congruous uſes, that they are diſcernable to a very ordinary

underſtanding, how much more to the infinite Wiſdom of God!

§. XXVII. Now hereupon we ſay further, There is the like congruity, upon as valuable (though not altogether the ſame) reaſons that, in the affaires of Grace, There be *ſomewhat correſpondent*. That, ordinarily, it be ſought and expected, in the uſe of ordinary means. And that, ſometimes, its ſovereignty ſhew it ſelf in preventing exertions. And in working ſo heroically, as none have, before hand, in the neglect of its ordinary methods, any reaſon to expect.

And we may fitly add, That where Sovereignty is pleaſed thus to have its exerciſe and demonſtrate it ſelf, It is ſufficient that there be a *general congruity*, that it do ſo ſometimes, as an ante-

cedent reaſon to the doing *of ſome ſuch extraordinary things*, but that there ſhould be a *particular leading congruity* or antecedent reaſon, to invite theſe extraordinary operations of grace, to one perſon more than another, is not neceſſary. But it is moſt congruous, that, herein, it be moſt arbitrary. Moſt agreeable to the *Supremacy* of God; to *the State of Sinful Man*, who hath infinitely diſoblig'd him, and can deſerve nothing from him; Yea, and even to the *nature of the thing*. For, where there is a parity, in any objects of our own choice, there can be no leading reaſon to this, rather than that. The moſt prudent man, that is wont to guide himſelf by never ſo exquiſite wiſdom, in his daily actions, where there is a perfect indifferency,

between doing this thing or that, is not liable to cenſure, that he is not able to give a reaſon why he did *that*, not *the other*. Wiſdom hath no exerciſe in that caſe.

But that the Bleſſed God doth *ordinarily* proceed in theſe affairs, by a ſteady rule, and, *ſometimes*, ſhew his liberty of departing from it, is to be reſolved into his infinite wiſdom, it being, in it ſelf, moſt fit, he ſhould do both the one, and the other; and therefore *to him* moſt *neceſſary*. Whereupon, the great Apoſtle *Saint Paul*, diſcourſing upon this ſubject, doth not reſolve the matter into *ſtrict juſtice*, nor *abſolute ſovereignty* (both which have their place too, in his proceedings with men, as the ſacred writings do abundantly teſtifie) but we find him in a tranſport, in the con-

contemplation of the *divine wiſdom*, that, herein, ſo eminently ſhines forth. *O the depths of the riches both of the wiſdom and knowledge of God! how unſearchable are his judgments, and his waies paſt finding out!* Rom. 11. 33. *See to the ſame purpoſe*, c. 16. 25, 26, 27. *And* Eph. 1. 5, 6, 7, *with the* 8.

§. XXVIII. To ſumme up all, we conclude it obvious to the apprehenſion of ſuch as conſider, that it was more congruous the general courſe of Gods Government, over man, ſhould be by *moral inſtruments*.

And, howſoever it were very unreaſonable, to imagine, that God cannot in any caſe, extraordinarily overſway the inclinations, and determine the will of ſuch a creature, in a way agreeable enough to its nature, (tho we particlarly know not, as we

are not concerned to know, or curiouſly to enqire in what way) And highly reaſonable to admit that in many caſes he doth.

It is notwithſtanding manifeſt, to any ſober reaſon, that it were very incongruous, this ſhould be the ordinary courſe of his conduct towards Mankind, or the ſame perſons at all times.

That is, that a whole order of intelligent creatures ſhould be moved, only by inward impulſes; That Gods precepts, promiſes and comminations, whereof their nature is capable, ſhould be all made impertinencies, through his conſtant overpow'ring thoſe that ſhould neglect them; That the faculties, whereby men are capable of moral Government, ſhould be rendered, *to this purpoſe*, uſeleſs and vain;

And

And that they ſhould be tempted to expect, to be conſtantly manag'd as meer machines, that know not their own uſe.

Nor is it leſs apprehenſible, how incongruous it were alſo, on the other hand, to ſuppoſe that the exteriour frame of Gods Government, ſhould be totally unaccompanied with an internal vital energie; or exclude the inward motions, operations, and influences, whereof ſuch a creature is alſo fitly capable. Or that God ſhould have barr'd out himſelf, from all inward acceſs to the ſpirits of men, or commerce with them. That the ſupream univerſal, *paternal mind* (as an heathen call'd it) ſhould have no way for efficacious communications, to his own ofspring, when he pleaſes; that (ſo unſu-

rably to ſovereignty) he ſhould have no objects of ſpecial favour, or no peculiar waies of expreſſing it.

It is manifeſtly congruous that the divine Government, over man, ſhould be (as it is) mixed or compoſed of an external frame of lawes, with their proper ſanctions, and inforcements, and an internal effuſion of power, and vital influence, correſpondent to the ſeveral parts of that frame; and which might animate the whole, and uſe it, as inſtrumental, to the begetting of correſpondent impreſſions on mens ſpirits.

That this Power be put forth, not (like that of a natural Agent) *ad ultimum* (which if we would ſuppoſe the Divine Power to be, new Worlds muſt be ſpringing up

up every moment) but *gradually*, and with an apt contemperation to the ſubject, upon which it is deſigned, to have its operations, and withal, *arbitrarily*, as is becoming the Great Agent from whom it proceeds, and to whom it, therefore, belongs, to meaſure its exertions, as ſeems meet unto him. That it be *conſtantly* put forth (tho moſt gratuitouſly, eſpecially the diſobligation of the Apoſtacy being conſidered) upon all, to that degree, as that they be enabled to do much good, to which they are not impelled by it. That it be ever ready (ſince it is the Power of *Grace*) to go forth in a further degree than it had yet done, whereſoever any former iſſues of it have been duly comply'd with. Tho it be ſo little ſuppoſable that Man ſhould hereby

hereby have obliged God thereto, that he hath not any way obliged himſelf; Otherwiſe, than that he hath imply'd a readines, to impart unto Man what ſhall be neceſſary to enable him to obey, ſo far as, upon the Apoſtacie, is reqiſite to his relief: If he ſeriouſly endeavour to do his own part, by the Power he already hath received. Agreeably to the common ſaying, *homini facienti qod in ſe eſt*, &c. That, according to the Royal Liberty, wherewith it works, it go forth, as to ſome, with that efficacy, as notwithſtanding whatever reſiſtance, yet to overcome, and make them captives to the authority and love of Chriſt.

The univerſal continued rectitude of all intelligent creatures had, we may be ſure, been willed, with a peremptory, efficacious will if it had been beſt. §. XXIX.

That is, if it had not been leſs congruous than to keep them, ſome time (under the expectation of future confirmation and reward) upon trial of their fidelity, and in a ſtate wherein it might not be impoſſible to them to make a defection. And ſo it had eaſily been prevented, that ever there ſhould have been an apoſtacie from God, or any ſin in the world.

Nor was it either *leſs eaſie*, by a mighty irreſiſtible hand, univerſally to expel ſin, than prevent it; or *more neceſſary* or more to be expected from him.

But if Gods taking no ſuch courſe,

courſe, tended to render his Government over the world more *auguſt*, and awful, *for the preſent*, and the reſult, and final iſſue, of all things more glorious *at length*, and were conſequently, *more congruous*; *that* could not be *ſo willed, as to be effectually procured by him.*

For whatſoever obligation *ſtrict juſtice* hath upon us, that *congruity* cannot but have upon him. And whereas it would be concluded, that whatſoever any one truly wills, they would effect *if they could*, we admit it for true, and to be applied in the preſent caſe. But adde,

That as we rightly eſteem that *impoſſible to us*, which we cannot *juſtly* do, ſo is that *to him*, not only, which he cannot do *juſtly*, but which, upon the whole matter,

ter he cannot do, *moſt wiſely* alſo. That is, which his infinite wiſdom doth not dictate, is moſt congruous and fit to be done.

Things cohere, and are held together, in the courſe of his diſpenſation, by congruities as by adamantine bands, and cannot be otherwiſe. That is, comparing and taking things together, eſpecially the moſt important. For otherwiſe, to have been nicely curious about every minute thing, ſingly conſidered, that it might not poſſibly have been better (as in the frame of this or that *individual* animal or the like) had been needleſly to interrupt the courſe of Nature, and therefore, it ſelf, *to him* an incongruity. And doth, in them that expect it, import more of a trifling diſpo-

diſpoſition, than of true Wiſdom.

But *To him* whoſe Being is moſt abſolutely Perfect to do that, which, all things conſidered, would be *ſimply beſt*, *i. e.* moſt *becoming him*, moſt honourable, and God-like, is *abſolutely neceſſary*. And conſeqently, it is to be attributed to his Infinite Perfection, that, *unto him*, to do otherwiſe, is *abſolutely impoſſible*.

And if we yet ſee not all theſe *congruities* which, to him, are *more than a Law*; it is enough that they are obvious to his own eye, who is the only competent Judge.

Yet, moreover, it is finally to be conſidered, that the methods of the Divine Government, are, beſides his, to be expoſed to the view,

view, and judgment of *other* Intellects *than our own*, and we expect they ſhould to our own, in *another ſtate*. What conception thereof is, already, received and formed in our Minds, is but an Embryo, no leſs imperfect than our preſent ſtate is.

It were very unreaſonable to expect, ſince this World ſhall continue but a little while, that all God's managements, and waies of procedure, in ordering the great affairs of it, ſhould be attempered, and fitted to the judgment, that ſhall be made of them in this temporary ſtate, that will ſo ſoon be over: And to the preſent apprehenſion and capacity of our (now ſo muddied and diſtempered) Minds. A vaſt and ſtable eternity remains, wherein, the whole Celeſtial *Chorus* ſhall enter-

entertain themſelves, with the grateful contemplation, and applauſe, of his deep Counſels. Such things as now ſeem perplex, and intricate to us, will appear moſt irreprehenſibly fair, and comely to *angelical minds*, and our own, when we ſhall be vouchſaf't a place amongſt that happy Community. What diſcovery God affords of his own glorious Excellencies, and Perfections is *principally* intended to recommend him, in that ſtate; wherein he, and all his waies and works, are to be beheld with everlaſting, and moſt complacential approbation.

Therefore tho now we ſhould covet the cleareſt and moſt ſatisfying account of things, that can be had; we are yet to exerciſe patience, and not precipitate our judgment

judgment of them before the time: As knowing our preſent conceptions will differ more, from what they will be hereafter, than thoſe of a *Child*, from the maturer thoughts of the *wiſeſt man*. And that many of our conceits, which we thought wiſe, we ſhall, *then*, ſee cauſe to put away, as childiſh things.

The diſorder (Sir,) *of this heap* (*rather than frame*) *of thoughts and diſcourſe, as it cannot be thought more unſutable to the ſubject, than ſutable to the Author; and the leſs*

diſpleaſe, by how much it could leſs be expected to be otherwiſe, from him, *even in the beſt circumſtances; So it may lay ſome claim to your eaſier pardon, as having been, moſtly, huddled up in the intervals of a troubleſome, long Journey. Wherein he was rather willing to take what opportunitie the inconveniencies and hurry of it could allow him; Than neglect any, of uſing the earlieſt endeavour to approve himſelf (as he is your great admirer)*

Moſt honored Sir,

Your moſt obedient

humble Servant,

H. W.

Contents.

Sect. I.

THe *Propoſal of the difficulty to be diſcus't. Diſqiſition concerning the words* Preſcience, *or* Foreknowledg *waved.* pag. 1.

Sect. II.

Great care to be taken leſt we aſcribe to God inconſiſtencies, *under the pretence of aſcribing* all Perfections. *Eqal care, leſt we deny to him any Perfection, upon the firſt appearance of its not-agreeing with*

ſomewhat elſe, which we have found it neceſsary to aſcribe. Our own Minds to be ſuſpected. And endeavour'd with to the utmoſt, before we conclude what is, or is not to be aſcribed to God; if we meet with a difficulty. p. 5.

Sect. III.

Such Divine Attributes as agree to the Deity by the Common Suffrage of all conſidering men, *to be diſtinguiſht from thoſe that are only concluded to belong to him upon the ſubtile reaſonings of* but a few. *Yet the danger to be carefully avoided, of miſtaking any dictate of* Corrupt affection, *for a* Common notion. p. 11.

Sect. IV.

His own Word, therefore, our ſureſt meaſure, by which we are to judg

judg what belongs to him, and what not. Which plainly aſſerts both his Wiſdom, *and* Sincerity. *As our own Minds do alſo* naturally *ſuggeſt to us.* *p.* 16.

Sect. V.

It alſo ſeems plainly both to aſſert and prove his Univerſal Preſcience. *Particularly of ſuch things from which he dehorts. Whence his* dehorting *is no proof of his not-*foreknowing. *p.* 24.

Sect. VI.

Theſe therefore to be reconcil'd. Which not ſo difficult as to reconcile his dehortations from ſinful actions, *with his* predeterminative concurrence *thereto.* This *undertaking waved as not* manageable. *p.* 31.

Sect. VII.

Nor neceſsary. The principal Arguments that are brought for it, not concluding. That every thing of positive Being *muſt be from God. That otherwiſe he could not foreknow ſuch actions.* The former *conſidered. How we are to ſatisfie our ſelves about* the latter. *p.* 34.

Sect. VIII.

The undertaken difficulty weighed. Nothing in it of contradiction. *Nothing of* indecorum. *p.* 50.

Sect. IX.

Gods ſuppoſed foreknowledg *of contingent actions, alters not the natural* goodnes *or* evil *of them. p.* 54.

Sect. X. & XI.

How God may be ſaid to act for any end? *His public declarations to men have a more principal end, than their* obedience, *and* felicity. *Which is attained, tho* this *fail. The difficulty, therefore, concerning the* Divine Wiſdom *vaniſhes.* *p.* 57. & 60.

Sect. XII.

That, *concerning the* Sinceritie *of* God *conſidered. That other End,* Man's obedient compliance, *attained in great part.* *p.* 64.

Sect. XIII.

God not obliged to procure *his publiſht* Edicts *ſhould reach every Individual perſon. 'Tis owing to*

the Wickednes of the World that they generally *do not ſo.* *p.* 67.

Sect. XIV.

He ſhewes ſpecial favour to ſome Nations *herein without being injurious to* others. *Yea expreſſes much Clemency, and Mercy to* all. *p.*74.

Sect. XV.

Where his gracious Methods ſucceed not, To be conſidered he Only applies himſelf to them in Common with the reſt. *p.* 78.

Sect. XVI.

Propoſed to be Enqired; What can be alledg'd out of his Word, that ſeems leſs-conſiſtent with ſincerity, towards them with whom things do not finally iſſue well? What fit courſe could

could be thought of more conſiſtent therewith? As to the former, *What* appearance *ſuch alledg'd Paſſages can be juſtly ſaid to have? Propounded to be* (*afterwards*) *ſhewn; that the* Truth of the thing *correſponds to that* appearance. *p.*81.

Sect. XVII.

What his declarations to men amount unto? What they are, by them, encouraged to expect? *p.*87.

Sect. XVIII.

Expreſſions of paſſionate earneſtnes, *how to be underſtood?* *p.*90

Sect. XIX.

The Ends to be brought about by God's own action only; *And thoſe which ſhould be brought to paſs* by the intervenient action of Man,

Man, *to be distinguished. God's Word represents him not as* so willing *the salvation of all men, as that it shall be effected whatsoever course they take.* *p.* 99.

Sect. XX.

Such a Will *as it represents him to have of man's welfare we ought to believe is in him. The distinction of his* Will *of* Good Pleasure, *and of the* Sign. *Of his* secret Will, *and* revealed (*as apply'd to this matter*) *animadverted on.* *p.* 105.

Sect. XXI.

God truly wills *the matter of his own Laws, and their welfare for whom he made them.* *p.* 108.

Sect. XXII.

Is not made liable to disappoint-

ment

ment hereby. Nor can hence an imperfect will be aſcrib'd to him. pag. 112.

Sect. XXIII.

The 2[d] Head (*propoſed Sect.* XVI.) *diſcuſsed; That no other* fit courſe *could be taken, that can be pretended more agreeable to ſincerity. Two only to be thought on.* To have pnbliſht no written Word. To have overpow'red all by ſtrong hand into compliance therewith. The former *not fit.* *p.* 121.

Sect. XXIV.

The latter *unfit alſo. The* Congruity *of things makes them* neceſſary, *with God. The* incongruity, impoſſible. *p.* 123.

Sect. XXV.

Innumerable Congruities *obvious to the* Divine Underſtanding *not perceivable by ours.* Two things *manifeſtly congruous*, to our apprehenſion. *That the Courſe of God's Government be*, for the moſt part, *ſteady, and uniform. That he ſometimes vary.* *p.* 128.

Sect. XXVI.

Both theſe many waies repreſented congruous, in reference to matters within the ſphere *of* Nature, *and* Policy. *p.* 132.

Sect. XXVII.

Eqally congruous, *that matters be in ſome degree correſpondently manag'd, within the* ſphere of Grace. *p.* 138.

Sect.

Contents.

Sect. XXVIII.

The Congruity *of both theſe in the matters of Grace more diſtinctly expreſſed.* *p.* 141

Sect. XXIX.

The Concluſion. *p.* 147

FINIS.

A

Poſt-Script

To the late

LETTER

OF THE

RECONCILEABLENESS

OF

God's Preſcience, &c.

By *John Howe*, the Author of that Letter.

Imprimatur,

Aug. 3. 1677. *Guil. Sill.*

LONDON:

Printed for *Brabazon Aylmer*, at the three Pigeons, over againſt the *Royal Exchange* in *Cornhil.* 1677.

A POST-SCRIPT TO The late Letter of the *Reconcileableneſs of God's Preſcience*, &c.

FInding that this Diſcourſe of the *Reconcileableneſs of God's Preſcience of the ſins of Men, with the wiſdom and ſincerity of his Counſels, Exhortations*, &c. hath been miſ-underſtood and miſ-repreſented; I think it reqiſite to ſay ſomewhat briefly in reference thereto.

I wrote it upon the motion of that honourable Gentleman to whom it is inſcribed; who apprehended ſomewhat of that kind might be of uſe to render our Religion leſs-exceptionable to ſome perſons of an *enqiring diſpoſition*, that might perhaps be too ſceptical and pendulous, if not prejudic't.

Having finiſht it, I thought it beſt the Author's Name ſhould paſs under ſome diſguiſe, ſuppoſing it might, ſo, better ſerve its end. For knowing my Name could not give the cauſe an advantage, I was not willing it ſhould be in a poſſibility of making it incur any diſadvantage. And therefore, as I have obſerved ſome, in ſuch caſes, to make uſe only of the *two laſt Letters*, I imitated ſome other, in the choice of

of the *penultimate*. But perceiving that Diſcourſe now to fall under Animadverſion, I reckon it becoming to be no longer concealed.

It was unavoidable to me, if I would, upon reaſonable terms, apply my ſelf to the conſideration of the matter I had undertaken, of ſhewing the conſiſtency of God's *Preſcience of the ſins of men*, with the *Preventive methods* we find him to have uſed againſt them, to expreſs ſomewhat of my ſenſe of (what I well knew to have been aſſerted by divers Schoolmen) God's *Predeterminative Coucurrence* to the ſins of men alſo.

For it had been (any one may ſee) very idle, and ludicrous trifling, to offer at reconciling thoſe methods with *God's Preſci-*

ence, and have waved that (manifeſtly) greater difficulty of reconciling them with his *Predeterminative concourſe*, if I had thought there had been ſuch a thing. And were a like caſe, as if a Chirurgeon, undertaking a wounded perſon, ſhould apply himſelf, with a great deal of diligence and addreſs, to the cure of a Finger ſlightly ſcratch't; and totally neglect a wound (feared to be mortal) in his Breaſt.

And whereas I reckon'd *God's Preſcience* of all whatſoever futurities, and, conſeqently, of the ſins of men, *moſt certain*, and demonſtrable (tho it was not the buſineſs of this Diſcourſe to demonſtrate it, but, ſuppoſing it, to ſhew its reconcileableneſs with what it ſeemed not ſo well to agree) if I had believed his

Pre-

Predeterminative concurrence to the ſins of men to be *as certain*; Perfect deſpair of being able to ſay any thing to purpoſe *in this caſe*, had made me reſolve to ſay nothing *in either*.

For, to ſhew how it might ſtand with the *Wiſdom* and *Sincerity* of the Bleſſed God, to counſel men not to ſin, to profeſs his hatred and deteſtation of it, to remonſtrare to men the great danger they ſhould incur by it; with ſo great appearance of ſeriouſneſs to exhort, warn, expoſtulate with them concerning it, expreſs his great diſpleaſure and grief for their ſinning, and conſeqent miſeries; and yet all the while act them on thereto, by a ſecret, but mighty and irreſiſtible influence, ſeem'd to me an utterly *hopeleſs* and *impoſſible un-*

dertaking. The other, without this (ſuppoſing, *as to this*, the caſe to have been as ſome have thought it) a very *vain one*.

But being well aſſured, that what ſeem'd the greater difficulty, and to carry moſt of terrour and affright in the face of it, was only a *Chimera*. I reckoned the other very ſuperable, and therefore directed my Diſcourſe thither, according to the firſt deſign of it, which was in effect but to juſtifie God's making ſuch a creature as Man, and governing him agreeably to his Nature.

Now judging it reqiſite, that he who ſhould read that Diſcourſe concerning *this deſigned Subject*, with any advantage, ſhould have the ſame thoughts *of the other, which was waved*, that I had; I apprehended it neceſ-

ſary

ſary to communicate thoſe thoughts concerning *that*, as I did. Not operouſly, and as my buſineſs, but only on the By, and as was fit in reference to a thing that was to be waved, and not inſiſted on.

Now I perceive that ſome perſons, who had formerly entertained that ſtrange opinion *of God's Predeterminative concurrence to the wickedeſt actions*, and not purged their minds of it, have been offended with *that Letter*, for not expreſſing more reſpect unto it. And yet offered nothing, themſelves (which to me ſeems exceeding ſtrange) for the ſolving of that great difficulty and encumbrance, which it infers upon our Religion.

Nor do I much wonder, that this opinion of *Predeterminative* con-

concourſe, to ſinful actions, ſhould have ſome ſtiff adherents among our ſelves. For having been entertained by certain *Dominicans*, that were apprehended, in ſome things to approach nearer us, than others of the *Roman* Church; it came to receive favour and countenance from ſome of our own, of conſiderable note for piety and learning, whoſe Name and Authority cannot but be expected to have much influence, on the minds of many.

But I ſomewhat wonder, that they who have had no *kindneſs* for *this Letter*, upon the account of its diſſent from them, in this particular, ſhould not allow it *common juſtice*. For becauſe it hath not ſaid every thing they would have had it ſay, and that would have been grateful to them-

themſelves, they impute to it the having ſaid what it ſaid not, and what they apprehended would be moſt ungrateful to all pious and ſober men.

The ſum is, they give out concerning it, that it denies the Providence of God about ſin, which all good men ought to abhor from; and inſinuate that it falls in with the ſentiments of *Durandus*, which they know many think not well of.

All that I intend to do, for the preſent, upon this occaſion, ſhall be to ſhew wherein *the Letter* is miſ-repreſented, and charged with what it hath not in it. To remark what is ſaid againſt *that ſuppoſed ſenſe of it*, and give the *true ſenſe* of what it ſays touching this matter; with a further account of the Author's mind here-

herein, than it was thought fit to inſert into ſo tranſient and occaſional a Diſcourſe as that part of *the Letter* was. Whereby it may be ſeen, wherein he agrees with thoſe of that oppoſite perſuaſion, and what the very *point* of difference is. Further than this, I yet intend not to go, till I ſee further need.

There have two Diſcourſes come to my view that have referred to that *Letter*. The one in Manuſcript only; which, becauſe it is uncertain to me, whether the reputed Author of it will own it or no; and, becauſe it ſays little or nothing, by way of argument, againſt the *true ſenſe* of the *Letter*, I ſhall take no further preſent notice of. The other is *Printed*, and offers at ſomewhat of *argument*, which there-

therefore I ſhall more attentively conſider.

It doth *this Letter* an honour, whereof its Author never had the leaſt ambition or expectation, to inſert the mention of it into the cloſe of a very learned, elaborate Work †; with which it might, yet, eaſily be imagined, *its* ſimplicity, and remoteneſs from any pretence to learning, would ſo ill agree, that a qarrel could not but enſue. It is from one, who having ſpent a great part of his time in travelling thorough ſome Regions of *literature*, and been peaceable, as far as I have underſtood, in his Travels; it might have been hoped would have let this Pamphlet alone, when, for what I can obſerve, he finds no fault with it but what he makes; and is fain to accuſe it

† *Court of the Gentiles, part 2. page 522.*

it of what is no where to be found in it, leſt it ſhould be innocent.

It is an unaccountable pleaſure which men of ſome humours take, in depraving what is done by others, when there is nothing attempted that doth interfere with them; nothing that can, righteouſly, be underſtood to croſs any good end, which they more openly pretend to, nor the more concealed end (if they have any ſuch) of their own glory.

Common edification ſeems leſs deſigned, when every thing muſt be thrown down, which is not built by their own hands, or by their own line and meaſure.

I plead nothing of merit in this little Eſſay, only I ſay for it,

it, that I know not what it can be guilty of towards this *learned man*, that can have occaſioned this aſſault upon it by his Pen. By how much the leſs it keeps his road, the more I might have thought it out of the way of his notice. I am ſure it meant him no harm, nor had any deſign to pilfer from him any part of his Collections.

But he ſays, *he may not let it paſs*. Then there is no remedy. But I wonder what he ſhould mean by *he may not*. It muſt either mean, that *he thought it unlawful* to let it paſs, or that he had *a mighty ſtrong and irreſiſtible inclination* to ſqabble a little with it. The *former* cannot be imagined. For then, for the ſame reaſon, he would have attempted ſundry others of former and later

later days, that have ſaid much to the purpoſe, which *this Letter* doth but touch *obiter*, and on the By; in its way to another deſign. But thoſe were Giants, whom it was not ſo ſafe to meddle with. Therefore he could very wiſely *let them paſs*, tho they have wounded his beloved Cauſe, beyond all that it is in the power of his, (or any) Art to Cure.

Whence it is conſeqent, that the whole buſineſs muſt be reſolved *into the latter*. And this inclination cannot but owe it ſelf to ſome peculiar aſpect and reference he had to the Author. Whom, tho he was *in incognito*, yet (as I have been informed) he profeſſes to have diſcourſt with upon the ſame Subject many times. And ſo, therefore, he might

might once more before this public rancounter, if he had thought fit, and Nature could have been repel'd a while.

It is true, he hath found me not facile to entertain his Sentiments in this matter. And indeed I have deeply dreaded the portentous imaginations which I found had more lightly tinctur'd his Mind, as to this thing, concerning the Bleſſed God. Than which, upon deliberation, I do believe, no human Wit can ever deviſe worſe. As I have often freely told divers of my Friends, and 'tis very likely, among them, himſelf. Tho I do not ſuſpect the contagion to have infected his vitals; By a priviledg, vouchſaf't to ſome, that they may poſſibly drink ſome deadly thing that ſhall not hurt them.

But why muſt an impatiency of this diſſent break out into ſo vindictive an hoſtility? I will not ſay I expected more friendly dealing.

For, as I do well know it was very poſſible ſuch a public conteſt might have been manag'd with that candour and fairnes, as not at all to intrench upon friendſhip. So, as it is, I need not own ſo much weaknes, as, upon many years experience, not to be able to diſtinguiſh, and underſtand there are ſome tempers leſs capable of the ingenuities that belong to that pleaſant relation.

But it was only a charitable errour of which I repent not, that I expected a more righteous dealing.

He pretends to give my ſenſe, in other words, And then gravely

ly falls to combating his own man of ſtraw which he will have repreſent me, and ſo I am to be tortured *in Effigie.*

[*It can never be proved, that it implies a contradiction, for God to make a Creature, which ſhould be capable of acting without immediate Concourſe.*]

This he puts in a different character, as if I had ſaid ſo much.

And why might not my own words be allowed to ſpeak my own ſenſe? But that his underſtanding and eyes, muſt then have conſpired to tell him, that the ſenſe would have been qite another? It is only a [*predeterminative*] *concurrence to all actions, even thoſe that are moſt malignantly wicked*, p. 32. And again, *Gods concurring, by a* [*determinative*] *influence unto wicked actions*, p. 36.

Which is the only thing I ſpeak of; as what I cannot reconcile with the *Wiſdom* and *Sinceritie*, of his Counſels and Exhortations, againſt ſuch actions.

And if he had deſigned to ſerve any common good end, in this undertaking of his, why did he not attempt to reconcile them himſelf? But the *Wiſdom* and *Sinceritie* of God are thought fit, (as it would ſeem) to be ſacrificed to the reputation of his more peculiarly admired Schoolmen. If there be ſuch an univerſal determination, by an irreſiſtible Divine influence, to all even the wickedeſt actions (which God forbid!) methinks ſuch a difficulty ſhould not be ſo eaſily paſt over. And ſurely the reconciling ſuch a *determinative influence* with the *Divine Wiſdom and Sinceritie*, had

had been a performance worth all his learned labours beſides, and of greater ſervice to the Chriſtian name and honour.

But it ſeems the denying *concurrence* by ſuch *predetermining influence*, is the denying of *all immediate concurrence*. And I am ſent to the *Thomiſts*, *Scotiſts*, *Jeſuites*, and *Suarez*, more eſpecially to be taught otherwiſe. As if all theſe were for *determinative concourſe*. Which is very pleaſant, When the very *Heads* of the two firſt-mentioned *Sects* were againſt it, as we ſhall ſee further anon, the third *generally*, and *Suarez* particularly, whom he names, have ſo induſtriouſly and ſtrongly oppoſed it. Yea and becauſe I aſſent not to the Doctrine of *predeterminative concourſe*, I am repreſented (which was the laſt

ſpite that was to be done me) as a favourer of the *Hypotheſis* of *Durandus*. And he might, as *truly*, have ſaid of *Henry Nicholas*, but not ſo *prudently*, becauſe he knowes whoſe opinions have a nearer alliance to that Family.

Now I heartily wiſh I had a ground for ſo much charity towards him, as to ſuppoſe him ignorant that *immediate concourſe*, and *determinative*, are not wont to be uſed by the *Schoolmen*, in this controverſie, as terms of the ſame ſignification. If he do, *himſelf*, think them to be all one, what warrant is that to him to give the *ſame* for *my ſenſe*? When 'tis ſo well known they are not *commonly* ſo taken, and that *determinative* concourſe is ſo voluminouſly written againſt, where *immediate* is expreſly aſſerted. Let him

him but ſoberly tell me, what his deſign was, to daſh out the word [*determining*] from what he recites Of that *Letter*, and put in [*immediate*]. Which he knowes is not to be found in any of the places he refers to in it. Or what was the ſpring of that confidence that made him intimate the *Scotiſts*, *Thomiſts*, The *Jeſuites*, and particularly *Suarez*, to be againſt what is ſaid in the *Letter*, in this thing? If he could procure all the Books in the World to be burnt, beſides thoſe in his own Library, he would yet have an hard task to make it be believed in the next Age, that all theſe were for *God's efficacious determination of the Wills of men unto wicked actions.*

I need not, after all this, concern my ſelf, as to what he ſaies

about the *No Medium* between the extreams of his disjunctive propoſition. *Either the human will muſt depend upon the Divine independent Will of God*,&c. (as he phraſes it in the exceſs of his caution, leſt any ſhould think the *Will of God* was not a *Divine Will*) *Or God muſt depend on the human will*,&c. Unles he can ſhew that the human will cannot be ſaid to depend on the Divine, *as being enabled by it*, except it be alſo *determined* and *impelled* by it, to every wicked action. A created Being that was entirely from God, with all the powers and faculties which belong to it; That hath its continual ſubſiſtence in him, and all thoſe powers continued, and maintained by his influence every moment; That hath thoſe powers made habile, and apt for

what-

whatſoever its moſt natural motions and operations, by a ſutable influence, whenſoever it moves or operates. Can this creature be ſaid *not to depend*, as to *all its motions and operations*, unles it be alſo unavoidably *impelled* to do every thing to which it is thus ſufficiently *enabled*?

I again ſay, Was it impoſſible to God to make ſuch a creature that can, in this caſe, *act or not act*? It is here odly enough ſaid, *that the Author gives no demonſtration hereof.* Of what? *Why that it can never be proved* (as the reference to the foregoing word ſhewes) *that it implies a contradiction*, &c. It ſeems it was expected that Authour ſhould have *proved* by demonſtration, *that it can never be proved, that it implies a contradiction, for God to make a Creature*,

ture, which ſhould be capable of acting (as he feigns him to have ſaid) *without immediate concourſe.* By what rule of reaſoning was he obliged to do ſo? But if the proving there is ſuch a creature, as, in the caſe before expreſſed, can act without *determinative concourſe*, will ſerve turn to prove, that it cannot be proved, it implies a contradiction there ſhould be ſuch a One: I may think the thing was done. And may think it ſufficiently proved, that there is ſuch a creature; If it appear (whereof there is too much proof) that there are ſuch actions done by creatures, as, for the reaſons that were before alledged, it could not ſtand with the Nature of God to determine them unto.

And was nothing ſaid tending

to

to prove this, that it could not conſiſt with the Nature of God, to determine men unto all the wicked actions they commit? It ſeems unles it were put into mood and figure, 'tis no proof. Nor was it the deſign of thoſe Papers to *inſiſt* upon that ſubject; but there are things ſuggeſted *in tranſitu*, as ſuch a diſcourſe could admit, that (whether they are demonſtrative or no) would puzzle a conſidering perſon. *That God ſhould have as much influence, and concurrence to the worſt actions, as to the beſt. As much, or more than the ſinner or the tempter. That the matter of his Lawes to Adam, and his poſterity, ſhould be a natural impoſſibilitie.* And I now add, the *irreconcileablenes of that determination, with God's Wiſdom and Sinceritie*,&c. Theſe I ſhall reckon

reckon demonſtrations, till I ſee them well anſwered.

However if mine were a bad opinion, why was it not as confutable without the mention of *Durandus*? But that was, with him, an odious name; and fit, therefore, to impreſs the brand, which he deſired I ſhould wear for his ſake. This is a likely way to clear the truth. Yet if it ſerve not one deſign, it will another, he thinks, upon which he was more intent.

Are all for *Durandus*'s way that are againſt a *predeterminative influence* to wicked actions? I could tell him who have ſhewn more ſtrength in arguing againſt *Durandus*, than I find in all his Arguments; who yet have written, too, againſt *determinative* concourſe *to ſuch actions*, more than ever

ever he will be able to anſwer, or any man.

The truth is, when I wrote that *Letter*, I had never ſeen *Durandus*. Nor indeed did I conſult any Book for the writing of it, (as I had not opportunity, if I had been ſo inclined) except, upon ſome occaſions, the Bible. Not apprehending it neceſſary, to number votes, and conſider how many mens thoughts were one way, and of how many the other, before I would adventure to think any of my own: But, I have this day, upon the view of his Animadverſions, taken a view of *Durandus* too. And, really, cannot yet gueſs, what ſhould tempt him to parallel my conceptions with *Durandus*'s, but that he took *his*, for ſomewhat

an

L. 2. Dist. 1. Q. 5. D. 37. Q. 1. an ill-favoured name. *Durandus*, flatly, in several places denies God's *immediate concourse* to the actions of the Creatures. Which I never said nor thought. But do really believe his *immediate* concourse, to all actions of his Creatures (both *immediatione virtutis*, and *suppositi*, that I may more comply with his Scholastic humour, in the use of such terms, than gratifie my own) Yet not *determinative unto wicked actions*.

Again, *Durandus* denies *immediate concourse*, universally, and upon such a ground, as whereupon, the denial must eqally extend to *good* actions as to *bad*; viz. *That 'tis impossible the same numerical action should be from two or more Agents immediately and perfectly, except the same numerical*

Dist. 1. Q. 5. ut supr.

vertue

vertue ſhould be in each. *But* (he ſaies) *the ſame numerical vertue cannot be in God and in the Creature*, &c. Whereas he well knowes the *concourſe* or *influence* (for I *here* affect not the curioſity to diſtinguiſh theſe two termes, as ſome do) which I deny not to be *immediate* to *any actions*, I only deny to be *determinative*, as *to thoſe which* are wicked.

Yea and the Authours he qotes (§. 11.) *Aquinas* and *Scotus*, tho every body may know they are againſt what was the notion of *Durandas*, yet are as much againſt *himſelf*, if he will directly oppoſe that *Letter*, and aſſert determinative concourſe to wicked actions. They held *immediate concourſe*, not *determinative*. *The former*, tho he ſuppoſes *Divine help* in reference to the elections of the human will,

will, yet asserts the elections themselves to *be in mans own power*, and only saies that *in the executions of those elections men can be hindered.* That (whatsoever influence he asserts of the first cause) men still, *habent se indifferenter ad bene vel male eligendum.* *The other*, tho he also excludes not the *immediate* efficiency of God in reference to the actions of men, yet is so far from making it *determinative*, that the reason he gives why, in evil actions, man sins, and God doth not, is, *that* the one *of those Causes posset rectitudinem dare actui quam tenetur dare: et tamen non dat.* Alia *autem, licet non teneatur eam dare: tamen quantum est ex se daret, si voluntas creata cooperaretur;* in the very place which himself refers to. Wherein they differ from *this Author toto Cœlo*; and *from me*, in that they make not

1ª. Q. 83.

L. 2. Dist. 27. Q. 2.

not determinative influence neceſſary in reference to good actions, which I expreſly do.

Thus far it may be ſeen what pretence or colour he had to make *my Opinion* the ſame with *Durandus*'s, or, his own, the ſame with that of *Thomas* and *Scotus*.

But if he knew in what eſteem I have *the Schoolmen*, he would hardly believe me likely to ſtep one foot out of my way, either to gain the reputation of any of their names, or avoid the diſreputation.

He, notwithſtanding, ſuppoſed his own reputation to be ſo good(and I know no reaſon why he might not ſuppoſe ſo) as to make it be believed I was any thing he pleaſed to call me, by ſuch as had not opportunity to be otherwiſe informed.

And thus I would take leave of him, And permit him to uſe his own reflections upon his uſage of me, at his own leiſure. But that civility bids me (ſince he is pleaſed to be at the pains of catechiſing me) firſt to give ſome anſwer to the Qeſtions wherein he thus expoſtulates with me.

Q. 1. Q. 1. *Whether there be any action of Man on earth ſo good, which hath not ſome mixture of Sin in it? And if God concur to the ſubſtrate matter of it as good, muſt he not neceſſarily concur to the ſubſtrate matter as ſinful? For is not the ſubſtrate matter of the act, both as good and ſinful the ſame?*

A. 1. *A.* 1. It ſeems then, that God doth concur to the matter of an action *as ſinful.* Which is honeſtly acknowledged, ſince by his Principles, it cannot be denied; tho

tho moſt, of his way, mince the buſineſs, and ſay the concurrence is only to the action *which is ſinful*, not *as ſinful*.

2. This I am to conſider as an argument for God's *predeterminative concurrence* to wicked actions. And thus it muſt be conceived. That if God concur by *determinative influence* to the imperfectly good actions of *Faith*, *Repentance*, *Love* to himſelf, *Prayer*: Therefore to the acts of enmity againſt himſelf, *Curſing*, *Idolatry*, *Blaſphemy*, &c. And is it not a mighty conſeqence? If to actions that are good *qoad ſubſtantiam*, therefore to ſuch as are in the *ſubſtance* of them evil? We our ſelves can, in a remoter kind, concur to the actions of others: Becauſe *you* may afford, *your ſelf*, your *leading concurrence* to actions imperfectly

good, therefore may you to them that are down-right evil? becauſe to Praier, therefore to *Curſing* and *Swearing*? and then ruin men for the actions you induc't them to? You'l ſay God may rather, but ſure he can much leſs do ſo than you. How could you be ſerious in the Propoſal of this qeſtion?

We are at a loſs how it ſhould conſiſt with the Divine Wiſdom, Juſtice, Goodnes, and Truth to deſign the puniſhing Man, yet innocent, with everlaſting torments, for actions which God, himſelf, would irreſiſtibly move him to; Whereas his making a Covenant with *Adam* in reference to himſelf and his poſterity, implied there was a poſſibility it might be kept; at leaſt that he would not make the keeping of it,

it, by his own poſitive influence, impoſſible. And you ſay, *If he might concur to the ſubſtrate matter of an action as good,* (which tends to man's Salvation and Bleſſedneſs) he muſt neceſſarily concur (*and that by an irreſiſtible determinative influence, elſe you ſay nothing to me*) to the ſubſtrate matter of all their evil actions, *as evil*, which tend to their ruine and miſery, brought upon them by the actions which God makes them do. I ſuppoſe S. *Luk.* 6. 9. with *Hoſ.* 13.9. ſhew a difference. If you therefore ask me, Why I ſhould not admit this conſeqence? I ſay it needs no other anſwer, than that I take Wiſdom, Righteouſnes, Goodnes, and Truth, to belong more to the *Idæa* of God, than their contraries.

Q. 2. Q. 2. *Is there any action ſo ſinful that hath not ſome natural good as the ſubſtrate matter thereof?*

Anſw. *A.* True. And what ſhall be infer'd? That therefore God muſt *by a determinative influence* produce every ſuch action whatſoever reaſon there be againſt it? You might better argue thence the neceſſity of his producing, every hour, a new World; in which there would be a great deal more of *poſitive Entity*, and *natural goodnes*. Certainly the natural goodnes that is in the Entity of an action, is no ſuch invitation to the Holy God by determinative influence to produce it, as that he ſhould offer violence to his own Nature, and ſtain the Juſtice and Honour of his Government, by making it be done,

and

and then puniſh it being done.

Q. 3. *Do we not cut off the moſt illuſtrious part of Divine Providence in governing the lower World*, &c. Q. 3.

A. What? by denying that 'tis the ſtated way of God's Government, to urge Men, irreſiſtibly, to all that wickednes, for which he will afterwards puniſh them with everlaſting torments? I ſhould leaſt of all, ever have expected ſuch a qeſtion to this purpoſe, and am aſhamed further to anſwer it. Only name any act of Providence, I hereby deny, if you can. *Anſw.*

In the next place, That my ſenſe may appear, in my own words; And that I may ſhew *how far* I am of the ſame mind

with thoſe that apprehend me at ſo vaſt a diſtance from them; and where, if they go further, our *parting point* muſt be; I ſhall ſet down the particulars of my agreement with them, and do it in no other heads than they might have collected, if they had pleaſed, out of that *Letter*, As

1. That God exerciſeth an univerſal Providence about all his Creatures, both in ſuſtaining and governing them.

2. That, more particularly, he exerciſeth ſuch a Providence about Man.

3. That this Providence about Man extends to all the actions of all men.

4. That it conſiſts not alone *in beholding* the actions of men,

as

as if he were a meer ſpectatour of them only, but is poſitively active about them.

5. That this active Providence of God about all the actiens of men conſiſts not meerly in giving them the natural powers, whereby they can work *of themſelves*, but in a real influence upon thoſe powers.

6. That this influence is in reference to holy and ſpiritual actions (whereto ſince the Apoſtacie, the nature of Man is become viciouſly diſ-inclined) neceſſary to be *efficaciouſly determinative*; ſuch as ſhall overcome that diſ-inclination, and reduce thoſe powers into act.

7. That

7. That the *Ordinary, appointed* way for the communication of this *determinative influence*, is by our intervening conſideration of the inducements which God repreſents to us in his Word, *viz.* the Precepts, Promiſes, and Comminations, which are the moral inſtruments of his Government. No doubt but he may (as is intimated in *the Letter*, *p.* 141.) extraordinarily act Men, in ſome rarer caſes, by inward impulſe, without the help of ſuch external means, (as he did Prophets or inſpired perſons) And when he hath done ſo, we were not to think he treated them unagreeably to their natures, Or ſo as their natures could not, without violence, admit. But it hath been the care and deſignment of the

the Divine Wiſdom, ſo to order the way of diſpenſation towards the ſeveral ſorts of Creatures, as not only not, ordinarily, to impoſe upon them, what they could not conveniently be *patient* of, but ſo as that their powers and faculties might be put upon the *exerciſes* whereof they were capable, and to provide that neither their *paſsive* capacity ſhould be overcharged, nor their *active* be unemployed.

And whereas the reaſonable nature of Man renders him not only ſuſceptible of unexpected *internal impreſsions*, but alſo capable of being Governed *by Laws*, which reqires the uſe of his own endeavour to underſtand & obey them; And whereas we alſo find ſuch Lawes are *actually made* for him, and

and propounded to him with their proper enforcements. If it ſhould be the fixed courſe of God's Government over him, only to guide him by inward impulſes, This (as is ſaid, *p.* 142) would render thoſe Lawes and their Sanctions impertinencies, His faculties whereby he is capable of Moral Government *ſo far*, and *to this purpoſe*, uſeleſs and vain. And would be an occaſion, which the depraved Nature of Men, would be very apt to abuſe into a temptation to them, never to bend their powers to the endeavour of doing any thing that were of an holy and ſpiritual tendency (from which their averſion would be alwaies prompting them to deviſe excuſes) more than a meer machine would

would apply it ſelf to the uſes which it was made for, and doth not underſtand.

Therefore, leſt any ſhould be ſo unreaſonable, as to expect God ſhould only ſurprize them, while they reſolvedly ſit ſtill and ſleep; he hath, in his infinite Wiſdom, withheld from them the occaſion hereof; And left them deſtitute of any encouragement (whatſoever his extraordinary dealings may have been with ſome) to expect his influences, in the neglect of his *Ordinary Methods*, as is diſcourſed *p.*90. and at large in the following Pages. And which is the plain ſenſe of that admonition, *Phil.* 2. 12, 13. Yea and tho there be never ſo many inſtances of merciful ſurpriſals, preventive

ventive of all our own conſideration and care, Yet *thoſe* are ſtill to be accounted the *Ordinary Methods* which are ſo *de jure*, which would *actually* be ſo, if Men did their duty, and which God hath obliged us to obſerve and attend unto *as ſuch*.

8. That in reference to all other actions which are not ſinful, tho there be not a ſinful diſinclination to them, yet becauſe there may be a ſluggiſhnes, and ineptitude to ſome purpoſes God intends to ſerve by them, This influence is alſo alwaies *determinative* thereunto; whenſoever to the immenſe Wiſdom of God ſhall ſeem meet, and conducing to his own great and holy ends.

9. That,

9. That, in reference to *ſinful actions*; by this influence God doth not only ſuſtain men who do them, and continue to them their natural faculties and powers, whereby they are done, but alſo, *as the firſt Mover*, ſo far excite and actuate thoſe powers, as that they are apt and habile for any congenerous action, to which they have a natural deſignation; and whereto they are not ſinfully diſ-inclined.

10. That, if men do then employ them to the doing of any ſinful action; by that ſame influence, he doth, as to him ſeems meet, limit, moderate, and, againſt the inclination and deſign of the ſinful Agent, overrule and diſpoſe it to good.

But

But now, if, beſides all this, they will alſo aſſert; That *God doth, by an efficacious influence, move and determine men to wicked actions.* This is that which I moſt reſolvedly deny.

That is, in this I ſhall differ with them, that I do not ſuppoſe God to have, by internal influence, as far, an hand, in the worſt and wickedeſt actions, as in the beſt.

I aſſert more to be neceſſary to actions, to which men are wickedly diſ-inclin'd; but that leſs will ſuffice for their doing of actions, to which they have inclination more than enough. I reckon it ſufficient to the production of this latter ſort of actions, that their powers be actually

ally habile, and apt for any ſuch action, in the general, as is connatural to them; ſuppoſing there be not a peccant averſion, as there is to all thoſe actions that are Holy and Spiritual; which everſion a more potent (*even a determinative*) *influence* is neceſſary to overcome. I explain my ſelf by inſtance.

A man hath from God the powers belonging to his nature, by which he is capable of loving or hating an apprehended good or evil. Theſe powers, being, by a preſent Divine influence, rendred habile, and apt for action: He can now love a good name, health, eaſe, life, and hate diſgrace, ſicknes, pain, death. But he doth alſo by theſe powers thus habilitated for action,

love wickednes, and hate God. I ſay, now, that *to thoſe former acts* God ſhould over and beſides determine him, is not abſolutely and alwaies neceſſary; and, *to the latter*, is impoſſible. But that, to hate wickednes *univerſally*, *and as ſuch*, and to love God, the depravednes of his nature, by the Apoſtacie, hath made the *determinative influence* of efficacious grace neceſſary. Which, therefore, he hath indiſpenſable obligation (nor is deſtitute of encouragement) earneſtly to implore and pray for.

My meaning is now plain to ſuch as have a mind to underſtand it.

Having thus given an account wherein

wherein I agree with them, And wherein, if they pleaſe, I muſt differ. It may perhaps be expected I ſhould add further Reaſons of that difference on my part. But I ſhall for the preſent forbear to do it.

I know it may be alledged, that ſome very Pious (as well as Learned) Men have been of their opinion. And I ſeriouſly believe it. But that ſignifies nothing to the goodnes of the opinion. Nor doth the badnes of it extinguiſh my *Charity*, nor *reverence* towards the men. For I conſider, that as many hold the moſt important truths, and which moſt directly tend to impreſs the Image of God upon their Soules, that yet are never ſtamped with any ſuch impreſſion thereby; ſo,

it is not impoſſible ſome may have held very dangerous opinions, with a notional judgment, the pernicious influence whereof hath never diſtilled upon their hearts.

Neither ſhall I be willing without neceſſity to detect other mens infirmities. Yet if I find my ſelf any way obliged further to intermeddle in this matter, I reckon the time I have to ſpend in this World, can never be ſpent to better purpoſe, than in diſcovering the fearful conſeqences of that rejected opinion, the vanity of the ſubterfuges whereby its aſſertours think to hide the malignity of it; and the inefficacie of the Arguments brought for it.

Eſpecially thoſe two which the *Letter* takes notice of.

For

For as ſo ill-coloured an opinion ought never to be admitted without the moſt apparent neceſſity, So do I think it moſt apparent there is no neceſſity it ſhould be admitted upon thoſe grounds or any other. And doubt not but that both the Governing Providence of God in reference to all events whatſoever; and his moſt certain foreknowledg of them all, may be defended, againſt all oppoſers, without it.

But I had rather my preparations to theſe purpoſes, ſhould be buried in duſt and ſilence; than I ſhould ever ſee the occaſion which ſhould carry the ſignification with it of their being at all needful.

And I ſhall take it for a juſt and moſt deplorable occaſion, if

I ſhall find any to aſſert againſt me the contradictory to this Propoſition,

That God doth not by an Efficacious Influence Univerſally move and determine men to all their Actions; even thoſe that are moſt wicked.

Which is the only *true*, and *plain* meaning, of what was ſaid, about this buſines, in the before mentioned *Letter*.

FINIS.

·492330